

**Views of Seventeenth-Century  
Vietnam  
Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina &  
Samuel Baron on Tonkin**



**Cornell University**

Olga Dror and K. W. Taylor, editors and annotators

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Samuel Baron on Tonkin

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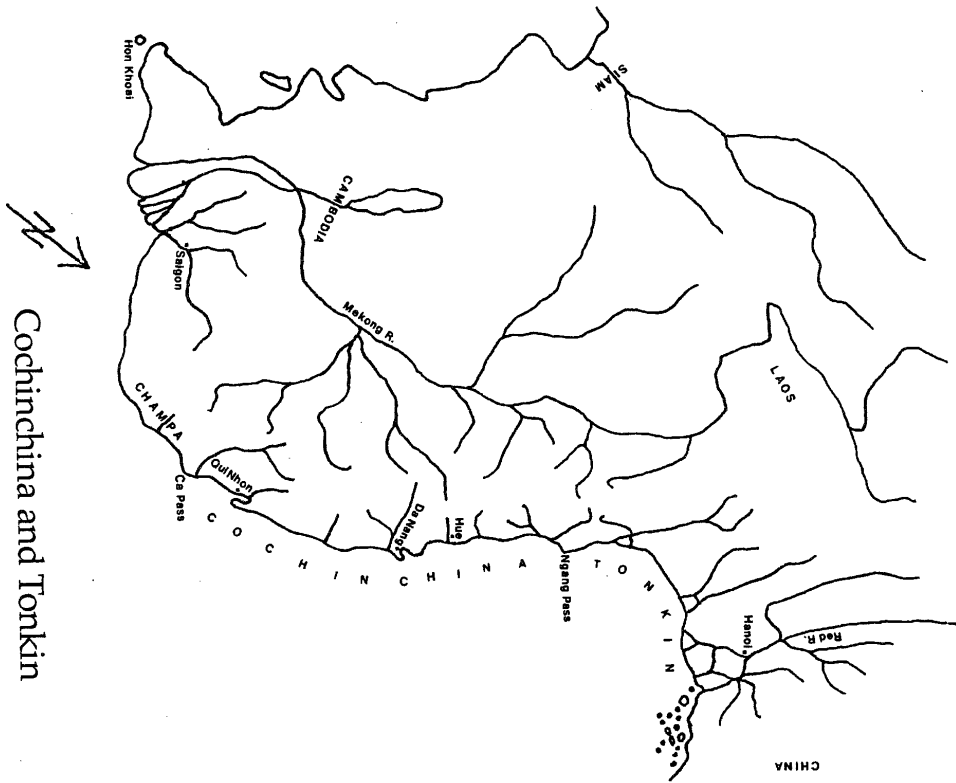
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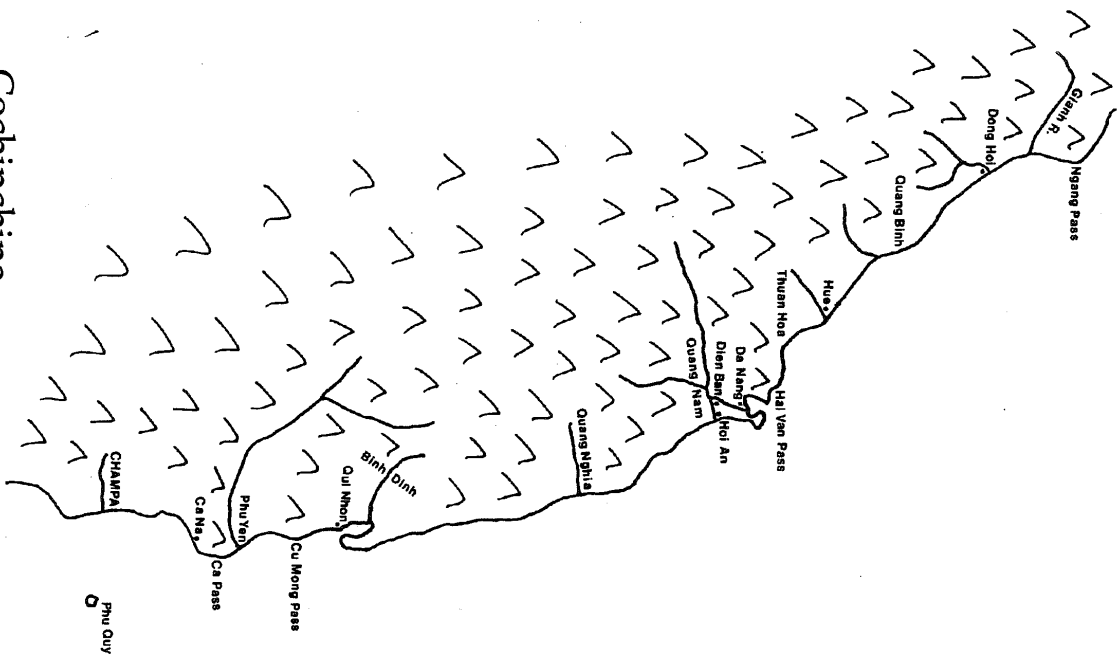




The World of Borri and Baron



Cochinchina and Tonkin



Cochinchina

## PREFACE

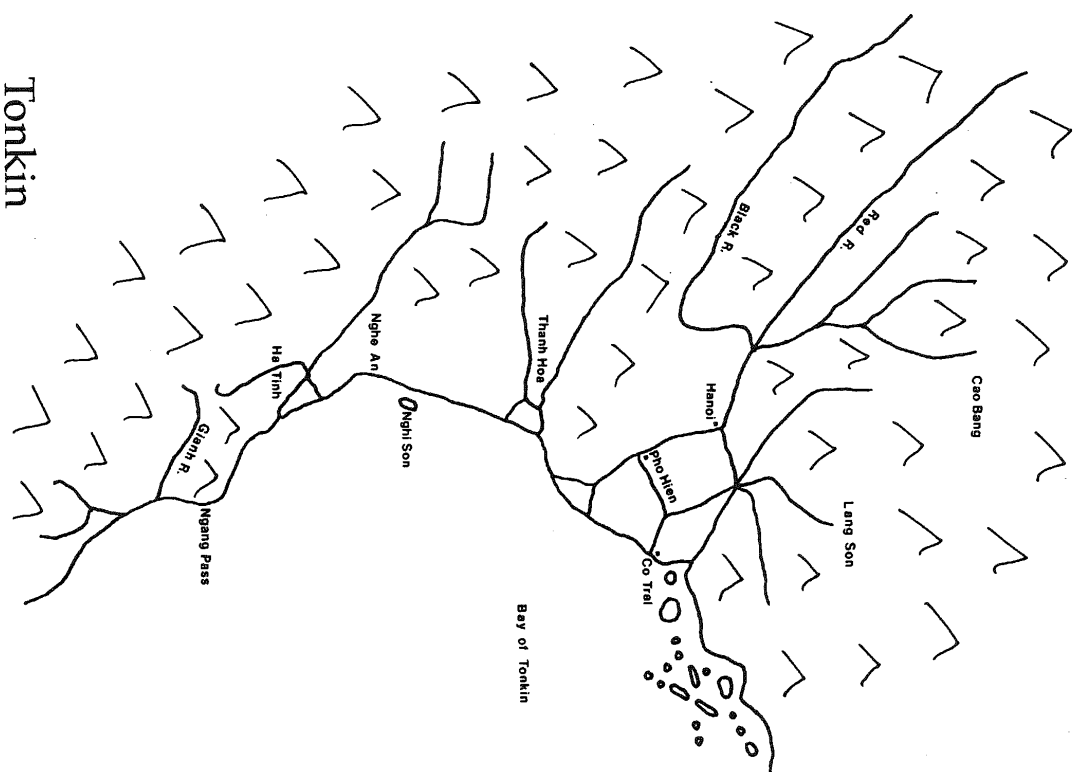
The idea for this volume came from a realization that although Vietnamese sources for the seventeenth century are few there is nevertheless a relative abundance of European accounts from that time, when Europeans first began to publish observations of the Vietnamese. European accounts, written by merchants, missionaries, travelers, and scientists, offer a wealth of detail and a diversity of perspectives. The selection of Christoforo<sup>1</sup> Borri and Samuel Baron was initially guided by three considerations. First, their accounts appeared in English translations prior to the nineteenth century, so they have a history of being read in the English language and in shaping an English-language vantage on the Vietnamese. Second, in the seventeenth century Vietnam was divided into two rival states, and we wanted to include an account written from each. Third, we wanted to represent the voices of the two main groups who experienced and wrote about life among the Vietnamese: merchants and missionaries. But beyond this, having looked carefully at the two authors and their accounts, we have become aware of how their writings reflect specific agendas, which will be discussed in the introduction.

Although we have benefited enormously from our discussions about all aspects of both authors and both accounts, we divided our work, with Olga Dror completing the introduction and annotations for Christoforo Borri and Keith Taylor doing so for Samuel Baron. We express our gratitude to Deborah Homsher for her patient and professional editorial assistance and to Michael Dror for his help with proofreading.

**NOTE ABOUT THE TRANSLATION:** ( ) indicates material in parentheses in the original; { } indicates marginal notes in the original; [ ] indicates material added by the annotators. Old English spelling has been retained in many cases, but in some cases has been updated for ease of modern reading.

The map and illustrations from Samuel Baron reproduced in this volume were obtained by permission of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University.

<sup>1</sup> Although Borri's personal name is spelled variously in different sources, we follow the spelling used in the original 1631 edition of his book about Cochinchina.



# INTRODUCTION

## COCHINCHINA AND TONKIN

In the seventeenth century, Europeans encountered two Vietnamese-speaking kingdoms. They called the northern kingdom Tonkin (variously spelled Tongueen, Tonking, Tunquin, Tunchin, etc.), derived from Vietnamese Đông Kinh, meaning "Eastern Capital," a name for Hanoi to distinguish it from the "Western Capital" that had been built at the beginning of the fifteenth century in a neighboring province.<sup>1</sup> This kingdom extended from the Chinese border south to include the modern province of Hà Tĩnh.

Europeans called the southern kingdom Cochinchina; its capital was eventually located at Huế. Several theories have been advanced to explain the name Cochín in Cochinchina. Some early European sources surmised that it derived from the vernacular appellation of the capital city of Tonkin, Kê Chọ ("marketplace"), corrupted into Coch;<sup>2</sup> this theory cannot be sustained. About the same time, a Japanese scholar, Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), proposed a theory by which Cochín (pronounced Koshi in Japanese) derived from Guangxi (pronounced Kosai in Japanese), but this idea has no discernible merit.<sup>3</sup> Early French colonial writers favored the idea that Cochín came from the expression Cồ Chiêm or its variant, Cồ Châm, sometimes conflated with Kê Châm ("Cham place"; transcribed Cachiam or some variant thereof in early European accounts), a Vietnamese expression for what is now the central coast of Vietnam, where the kingdoms of Champa once existed (the term means: "Old [i.e., pre-Vietnamese] Champa").<sup>4</sup> This conjecture has not survived.

It is now generally agreed that Cochín derived from Giao Chi, the name (pronounced Jiaozihi in Chinese, Koshi in Japanese) given by the ancient Chinese to northern Vietnam as early as 111 BCE.<sup>5</sup> As for the origin of Jiaozihi/Giao Chi, as is

<sup>1</sup> The "Western Capital" (Tây Kinh, variously Tây Đô) was a fortress built by the ruler Hồ Quý Ly (r. 1400-1407) in his home province of Thanh Hóa.

<sup>2</sup> For this idea, from the sixteenth century, see: Fernão Vaz Dourado, in A. Kammerer, "La découverte de la Chine par les portugais au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et la cartographie des portulans," *Toung Pao*, supplément to vol. XXXIX (1944): 260; and Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (Venetia: Giunti, 1554), 1:391, and, from the seventeenth century, see Alexander de Rhodes, *Histoire du royaume du Tonkin*, annot. J.-P. Duteil (Paris: Édition Kimé, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> See N. Perit, "Essai sur les relations du Japon et de l'Indochine aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 23 (1923): 5-6, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> E. Luro and E. Aymonier were cited for this theory at the turn of the twentieth century by Paul Pelliot; see P. Pelliot, "Le Fou Nan," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 3 (1903): 299, n. 1. A. Bonifacy also favored this idea when annotating his translation of Borri; see Cristoforo Borri, *Rédiction de la nouvelle mission* in "Les Européens qui ont vu le vieux Hué: Cristoforo Borri," *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué* 18:3-4 (July-December 1931): 286, n. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Pelliot, "Le Fou Nan," was apparently the first to propose this.

often the case with such terms, there is both a classical explanation based on ancient Chinese texts and an ethnographic explanation based on anecdote, but both have to do with feet. The term literally means "intertwined feet" and first appears in the *Liji* (Records of Rituals) to describe the habit among "southern barbarians" of sleeping in circular groups with heads out and feet together in the middle.<sup>6</sup> Europeans have been fond of explaining the term as a reference to a peculiarity in the anatomy of the inhabitants of northern Vietnam, whose large toes extend outward perpendicular to the foot, supposedly to help maintain balance while working in the mud of rice paddies.<sup>7</sup>

The term Giao Chi was used as an administrative designation for the Hanoi area throughout the centuries when northern Vietnam was a province of Chinese empires, until the tenth century. Giao Chi then became part of the title by which the Chinese Song dynasty enticed Vietnamese kings from the mid-tenth to the mid-twelfth centuries. In the early fifteenth century, the Ming dynasty used the name during its twenty-year effort to reestablish provincial government in northern Vietnam. The Portuguese, arriving in Asia at the beginning of the sixteenth century, encountered the term and used it to refer to Vietnam at a time when the country was not yet divided into two kingdoms.<sup>8</sup>

Christoforo Borri, as we see in this volume, believed that the Portuguese obtained "Cochin" from the Japanese "Koshi," apparently because of the phonetic similarities of the names in Portuguese and Japanese. Alexandre de Rhodes was of the same opinion.<sup>9</sup> This was a plausible supposition for those who like Borri and de Rhodes witnessed the lively maritime relations between Japan and Cochinchina in the early seventeenth century. It was the beginning of the expansion of Japanese trade after the establishment of the Tokugawa peace in the early seventeenth century. In part because trade with China was constrained by coastal disorder, Cochinchina became Japan's major trading partner. The Japanese Shoguns regulated trade by issuing "vermilion seal certificates" to ships specifying where the ships were allowed to trade.<sup>10</sup> Between 1604 and 1622, when Borri departed Cochinchina, sixty-nine Japanese ships received certificates to trade in Cochinese ports; during the same time, forty-nine certificates were issued for Luzon, forty for Siam, twenty-eight for Cambodia, twenty-one for Macao, twenty for Tonkin, and five for Champa.<sup>11</sup> From this, we can see the importance to Japan of trade with Cochinchina. The main port city of Cochinchina, Hôï An (called Fatio by Europeans), where Borri resided for a time, had a quarter especially reserved for the Japanese community.<sup>12</sup> De Rhodes notes the presence of Japanese merchants

in Tonkin,<sup>13</sup> and several Japanese Christians assisted the early Jesuit missionaries in Cochinchina.

Nevertheless, there is overwhelming evidence that the Portuguese obtained the name from the Malays; the nasalization of the second syllable of Cochin has no possible origin in Japanese, while there is a strong tendency to nasalize this syllable in Malay.<sup>14</sup> Sixteenth-century Portuguese transcriptions of Cochinchina include: Quachymdyna, Concamchina, Cauchinchyna, Cadenchina, Cauchenchina, Cauchinchina, and Coccinchina.<sup>15</sup> Tomé Pires and João Barros, two Portuguese who visited the area in the sixteenth century and wrote in 1515 and 1565, respectively, explicitly attribute the appellation to Malays. For example, we read in Tomé Pires's account, written before Cochinchina existed as a separate kingdom in the south, that "In Malacca this country [i.e., Vietnam] is called Cauchy Chyna" and "The kingdom is between Champa and China"; furthermore, he explains that it is called Cauchy Chyna "on account of Cauchy Coulam."<sup>16</sup> The reference to Cauchy Coulam is to Cochin, a city-state on the Malabar coast of southwestern India where the first Portuguese fleet arrived in 1500 and founded the first European fort in India. Cochin is not far from Quilon (here transcribed Coulam; also transcribed elsewhere as Kollam). Quilon was the largest and richest kingdom in that region, according to Pires, "the greatest in Malabar in land and subjects."<sup>17</sup> Quilon was a seaport that had diplomatic relations with China as early as the fourteenth century. Pires is making the point that the term Cochinchina was meant to distinguish this place from the Cochin in India.

In fact, in 1502 and 1503, after the Portuguese had reached India but before they had taken Malacca, Cochinchina had already appeared on maps made in Genoa in the inverted form of Chinacochim.<sup>18</sup> There is no apparent explanation for this inversion, but it reminds us that the name had an existence even before Europeans had explored the South China Sea. In the thirteenth century, Marco Polo reported the existence of Caugigu, which modern scholars read as Chinese Jiaozhuo (Vietnamese Gao Chi Quôc, "Kingdom of Gao Chi"), and an equivalent to this term appears in an early fourteenth-century Persian history of the Mongols.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, by the thirteenth century, Arab geographers were using the term Kawci min Cîn ("Gao Chi of China"), following a pattern they used for other places in the region of China, and L. Arousseau conjectured that this is the source of the term in Malay, for the word "min" was typically abbreviated into a nasalized syllable when spoken to produce KawciCîn, which is a plausible explanation for the Portuguese transcriptions of Malay that nasalize the second syllable. While other names from the Arab geographers in the pattern of "

<sup>6</sup> See K. W. Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Gio. Filippo de Marini, *Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tunquin et de Lao*, tr. L.P.L.C.C. (Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1666), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See L. Arousseau, "Sur le nom de Cochinchine," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 24 (1924): 564ff.

<sup>9</sup> De Rhodes, *Histoire du royaume du Tonkin*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> See Peri, "Essai sur les relations du Japon et de l'Indochine," pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> See Robert L. Innes, "The Door Ajar: Japan's Foreign Trade in the Seventeenth Century" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1980), p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> See *Ancient Town of Hoi An: International Symposium Held in Da Nang on 22-23 March, 1990* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1991).

<sup>13</sup> De Rhodes, *Histoire du royaume du Tonkin*, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> See Pelliot, "Le Fou Nan," and Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais sur les côtes du Viêt-Nam et du Campar: Etude sur les routes maritimes et les relations commerciales, d'après les sources portugaises: XVI, XVII, XVIII siècles* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1972), p. 42, n. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Arousseau, "Sur le nom de Cochinchine."

<sup>16</sup> See Armando Cortesão, trans., *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), pp. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Arousseau, "Sur le nom de Cochinchine."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 574-5.

min Cin" fell out of usage, this one did not because of the need to distinguish between the Cochín in India and the Cochín near China.<sup>20</sup>

Borri is the first to use the name Cochinchina to refer not to the Vietnamese polity as a whole but rather only to the southern realm. The nomenclature of Tonkin and Cochinchina to refer to northern and southern Vietnamese kingdoms appears to have originated with the Jesuits in the early seventeenth century,<sup>21</sup> for they were the first Europeans to pay close attention to this part of the world and to write about it.

In the early seventeenth century, Cochinchina extended from the Giành River in the province of Quảng Bình to the pass on the southern border of Phú Yên province (Đèo Cả; Cape Varella of French geographers); by mid-century, this kingdom was expanding the range of its armies into the Mekong plain, and by the end of the century it had established a major administrative center at Saigon, which had been a Vietnamese outpost since the 1620s.

At that time, aside from sailors, Europeans in Asia were either Catholic missionaries or merchants. Cristoforo Borri, an Italian Jesuit, was a missionary in Cochinchina from 1618 to 1622. Samuel Baron, born in Hanoi, probably in the late 1630s or early 1640s, of a European father and a Vietnamese mother, was active in Tonkin as a merchant in the 1670s and 1680s. Their accounts are among the earliest descriptions of what we now call Vietnam to appear in European languages.

In the eyes of seventeenth-century Europeans, Tonkin and Cochinchina were two countries with their own forms of government, economy, society, and culture. It was understood that the two countries were related by language, by historical memory among the educated, and by theoretical allegiance to a common but powerless monarch, but it was also understood that there was no meeting of minds between the northern and southern rulers, who were at war with each other for most of the century. Indeed, the border between the two countries was marked by fortified military encampments; the southerners had built a system of walls from the sea to the mountains at Đồng Hới to block northern armies.

What seventeenth-century Europeans saw as the Kingdom of Cochinchina had been relatively recently settled by Vietnamese-speakers. The most northerly parts of it, as far south as the vicinity of the modern city of Đà Nẵng, had been vulnerable to Vietnamese armies and immigrants at least since the early fifteenth century. In the 1470s, the Vietnamese permanently garrisoned the southern coast as far as what is now the southern border of Bình Định province (Đèo Cù Mông). When the Nguyễn clan gained ascendancy in these lands during the last half of the sixteenth century, Vietnamese speakers there were already viewing themselves as different from the "northerners."<sup>22</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, the Nguyễn had defeated repeated invasions by the northern Vietnamese and had established military garrisons in the Mekong plain.

The accounts of Borri and Baron give sharply different views of the Cochinchinese and the Tonkinese. According to Borri, the Cochinchinese were well governed, friendly and easy-going, curious about other countries, welcoming to foreigners, good at trade and commerce, wealthy and prosperous, and their

language was easy to learn. According to Baron, the Tonkinese were poorly governed, unfriendly and choleric, not curious about other countries, suspicious of foreigners, clumsy at trade, poor and hungry, and with a language difficult to learn. These accounts can be read as evidence of two different countries at that time in the territory of modern Vietnam. At the same time, we must remember that Borri and Baron were quite different people with different backgrounds, experiences, and agendas. Borri was a foreigner who resided among Vietnamese no more than five years. Baron was at home in Hanoi, where he was born and raised. Borri was European. Baron was Eurasian. Borri was a Catholic missionary. Baron was a Protestant merchant. Any use of their writings to document two separate Vietnams must also take into account their backgrounds, perspectives, and aims.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 577-9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 567-69.

<sup>22</sup> K. W. Taylor, "Nguyen Hoang and the Beginning of Viet Nam's Southward Expansion," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 42-65.

## THE VIETNAMESE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For nearly three centuries, from the collapse of the Lê dynasty at the beginning of the sixteenth century until the founding of the Nguyễn dynasty at the beginning of the nineteenth century, rival governments, most of the time at war with each other, ruled the Vietnamese. It appears that this was related to the southward movement of the Vietnamese into territories inhabited by Chams and Khmers and the inability of any single regime to maintain control of all Vietnamese speakers during that time of change.

The Lê dynasty was the first major dynasty not to come from the Red River plain. After less than a century in power, the Lê were overwhelmed by rivalries among clans in its home province of Thanh Hóa and a reaction to Thanh Hóa dominance of the Red River plain led by the Mạc, who in the 1520s proclaimed their own dynasty at Hanoi. During the rest of the sixteenth century, there was war between the Mạc, who came from the coast near a mouth of the Red River, and the Trịnh and Nguyễn clans of Thanh Hóa, who claimed to be fighting to restore the Lê. Vietnamese terms later applied to what Europeans called Tonkin and Cochinchina—that is *Dàng Ngoai* ("outside") for Tonkin and *Dàng Trong* ("inside") for Cochinchina—appeared at this time as the terms used by Lê partisans, both the Trịnh and the Nguyễn, to refer to themselves as the "inner" group that remained loyal to the Lê and to the Mạc as the "outer" group in rebellion against the legitimate dynasty.<sup>23</sup> It appears that in the seventeenth century this terminology acquired geographic as well as, if not instead of, political connotations, with a usage that appeared during the years of southern expansion and continues today among all Vietnamese, by which one goes "in" to the south and "out" to the north.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1470s, the Lê had extended Vietnamese rule into the south as far as *Cù Mông Pass*, on the southern border of what is now Bình Định province. The new territories thereby opened up for Vietnamese settlement became the base for a new political power in 1558, when the leader of the Nguyễn clan, seeking to avoid the rising power of his Trịnh ally, went south and established his headquarters in the region of Hue. In the 1590s, Nguyễn military forces assisted the Trịnh in driving the Mạc out of the Red River plain and into the upland province of Cao Bằng on the northern border, where they were protected by Ming China. However, within two decades, the Trịnh and Nguyễn were locked in a series of wars that lasted into the 1670s. Aside from a few years in the 1650s when Nguyễn forces occupied parts of what is now Hà Tĩnh province, these wars mainly consisted of Trịnh expeditions against the Nguyễn. By the 1630s, the Nguyễn began to construct a series of walls stretching from the mountains to the sea at *Đòng Hới*, which became the rock upon which all subsequent Trịnh attacks were broken. During this time, both the Trịnh and the Nguyễn claimed to be fighting on behalf of the Lê kings, who existed as virtual prisoners of the Trịnh in Hanoi. The Lê kings were called *vua*, the

Vietnamese word for "king," while the Trịnh and Nguyễn rulers were called *chúa*, the Vietnamese word for "lord" or "warlord."

The Trịnh-Nguyễn wars ended in relation to three factors. First, the rise of the Qing dynasty in China to replace the decrepit Ming had a calming effect on Vietnamese politics. The arrival of Qing forces on the border enabled the Trịnh to finally eliminate the Mạc, who had survived in Cao Bằng under the diplomatic protection of the Ming. But it also discouraged the Trịnh from continuing to channel its resources into warfare on its southern border. Second, the chronic lack of battlefield success eventually turned the focus of Trịnh government away from the frontier ambitions of Thanh Hóa warrior clans and toward administering the rice lands of the Red River plain. And third, Nguyễn success in continuing to expand the southern frontier and to accumulate wealth from foreign trade, even while concentrating resources to protect the northern border, made the aggressive Trịnh policy toward the south increasingly implausible.

In 1611, the Nguyễn pushed their border down to *Cả Pass* to include the modern province of Phú Yên. Champa thereafter became a subservient vassal kingdom. By the 1620s, the Khmer king had ceded the site of modern Saigon, which became a Nguyễn outpost. Thereafter, Nguyễn armies began to appear regularly in the Mekong plain to intervene in Khmer politics on behalf of various factions at the Khmer court. Later in the century, the Nguyễn settled large numbers of Ming loyalists fleeing the Qing conquest of China in the Mekong plain, and in the 1690s a permanent administrative headquarters was established at Saigon.

European merchants and missionaries first arrived among the Vietnamese during the era of the Trịnh-Nguyễn wars. The Portuguese had already been in the region for a century. They developed a strong relationship with the Nguyễn in trade and in military technology, particularly gunnery. Thus, in the second decade of the seventeenth century, the first missionaries to arrive among the Vietnamese came to Cochinchina on Portuguese boats. Among these first Europeans to live among the Vietnamese was Christophoro Borri. We read in his account about the warlike situation between the two Vietnamese states, even before the first battles took place. We also read about Nguyễn envoys on their way to Cambodia at the very beginning of Vietnamese involvement in the Mekong plain. Borri's account was written at the start of what would become a relatively successful Jesuit mission among Vietnamese in both Cochinchina and Tonkin. As we will see, he had interests other than gaining converts to the Christian religion, and these interests clearly shaped how he chose to remember his time in Cochinchina.

The Dutch East India Company established a relatively strong trading relationship with the Trịnh in the 1630s. The Trịnh were keen to involve the Dutch in their wars against the Nguyễn, and the rivalry between the Protestant Dutch and the Catholic Portuguese played into this situation. In the 1640s, the Dutch allowed some of their ships to be involved in Trịnh operations against the Nguyễn. Later efforts by the Dutch to establish relations with the Nguyễn were unsuccessful. Samuel Baron's father was deeply involved in Dutch affairs among the Vietnamese during this time, and Samuel Baron himself was born in Tonkin and apparently lived there through the 1650s. After his father sent him to Europe in 1659 and after his father's death in 1664, Baron went over to the English and reappeared in Asia in the 1670s and 1680s with the English East India Company.

The English attempted to establish trade with Tonkin beginning in 1672, but with virtually no success. By the time the English had arrived on the scene, the Trịnh-Nguyễn wars had ended and the Trịnh no longer saw any advantage in

<sup>23</sup> Roland Jacques, *Portuguese Pioneers of Vietnamese Linguistics* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2002), p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> K. W. Taylor, "Surface Orientations in Vietnam," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57/4 (November 1998): 959.

humoring Europeans. The English maintained a trading presence in Tonkin into the 1690s, but it was nothing but frustration for them. Failure to develop profitable trading relations colored the English view of Tonkin, and Baron's account expresses this frustration, emphasizing all the reasons that had become current among the English to explain the impossibility of conducting trade there. In contrast, half a century earlier, Borri's cheerful account of Cochinchina, affirming that the Vietnamese were wonderfully welcoming to Europeans and that trading with them could yield great profit, was immediately translated into English in the 1630s to promote English interest in establishing trading relations there.

Perhaps because the Vietnamese found themselves caught in a military and political impasse during the seventeenth century, there is very little that remains from them during that time in terms of literature or other unofficial writings. The voices of Borri and Baron offer unique points of entry into the Vietnamese scene of that era and at the same time carry us into their agendas, which, although not Vietnamese, reveal examples of early contact, interaction, and the exchange of information between Vietnamese and Europeans.

#### PHANTASMATIC COCHINCHINA<sup>25</sup>

In 1631, Father Christophoro Borri became the first European to publish an account of Cochinchina, indeed of any part of what is now Vietnam. Since then, his work, titled *Relazione della nuova missione delli P.P. della Compagnia di Gesù, al Regno della Cocinchina*<sup>26</sup> and referred to in this essay as the *Account*, has been translated into several languages and has become fascinating reading for the curious and an indispensable source for students and scholars studying seventeenth-century Vietnam. As the eighteenth-century English introduction to the *Account* published in this volume demonstrates, Borri was well qualified to write this work. An Italian Jesuit, one of the first missionaries among the Vietnamese, he spent five years in Cochinchina. The introduction affirms that he was fluent in the Vietnamese language, well traveled around the country, familiar with various classes of people, and that he wrote not as a visitor but as a resident of the country.<sup>27</sup>

This essay is a first step to look at Christophoro Borri beyond the *Account* and to consider how this might influence our understanding of his work.<sup>28</sup> Aside from the *Account*, information about Borri is scarce and controversial. We have notes about Borri and his works written by his contemporaries and by later generations of his fellow Jesuits, as well as by members of other religious orders, scientists, and scholars. But all of these notes are from people who evidently did not know Borri well, if at all. In addition, we have several letters from Borri to his friend Pietro della Valle, as cited in the latter's correspondence with various officials upon Borri's death, which were discovered in 1947 in the Archivio Vaticano and published by Angelo Mercati.<sup>29</sup> And there remains a letter from Borri to his superior, the General of the Society of Jesus, published by Mauricio Gomes dos Santos.<sup>30</sup> There are very few points on which the sources are in agreement with each other.

<sup>25</sup> I paraphrase the title of Panivong Norindr's book, *Phantasmatic Indochina*, on the French colonial effort to "exoticize" their colony; *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film, and Literature* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Rome: F. Catamo, 1631. All translations in this essay are mine, unless noted otherwise. I express my sincere gratitude to Daniel Bornstein and Andrew Kirkendall of Texas A&M University, who more than once lent me a hand in the intricacies of Italian and Portuguese texts, but who are not responsible for any mistakes, which always remain my own.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Borri, "An Account of Cochinchina in Two Parts; The First Treats of the Temporal State of that Kingdom; The Second of the Spiritual," in Awnsham & John Churchill, eds., *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London: John Walthoe et al., 1732), vol. 2, p. 721.

<sup>28</sup> This essay is based only on published materials.

<sup>29</sup> Angelo Mercati, "Notizie sul gesuita Cristoforo Borri e su sue 'inventioni' da carte finora sconosciute di Pietro della Valle, il pellegrino" (Note on the Jesuit Cristoforo Borri and on His "Inventions" from Previously Unknown Letters of Pietro della Valle, a Traveler), *Atti*, 15 (3), 1953, pp. 25-46. These letters, according to Mercati, were kept at the Archivio della Valle-del Buffalo, an archive of one of the most noble Roman families, consisting of documents from the fourteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>30</sup> Cristoforo Borri, "Al molto Rev. Pre. Generale. Cristoforo Borri sopra il libro che ho composto per stampare delli tre cieli" (To the Most Reverend General. Christophoro Borri on the Book Composed for Publication on the Three Heavens), *Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo*, *Armários dos Jesuitas*, fol. 314 r, 314 v, 315 r, 315 v, 316 r, 316 v, 317 r, 317 v.



# AN ACCOUNT OF COCHIN-CHINA. IN TWO PARTS.

THE FIRST TREATS OF THE TEMPORAL STATE OF THAT KINGDOM.

THE SECOND, OF WHAT CONCERNS THE SPIRITUAL.

WRITTEN IN ITALIAN

BY THE R. F. CHRISTOPHER BORRI, A MILANEZE, OF THE SOCIETY OF  
JESUS, WHO WAS ONE OF THE FIRST MISSIONERS IN THAT KINGDOM.

This account is so short, it requires not much preface, or to say the truth, any at all; a little time sufficing the curious to inform himself of the value and contents of it. Who the author was appears by the title, and what the cause of his going into that kingdom, his profession and only business being to preach Christianity to the infidels: he lived five years among them, and learn'd their language to perfection; and therefore his relation is not like those of travellers, who just pass through a country; or merchants, that touch at ports upon the business of trade, and consequently deliver very fabulous accounts, either to make their travels the more surprising, or for want of knowing better, taking things upon hear-say, and not understanding their language to get certain information. This father on the contrary frequently conversing with all sorts of people, and having a settled residence there for years, had the opportunity of knowing what he writ. He gives the description of the kingdom, a considerable part whereof he travell'd over: he speaks of its product, which he had the benefit of for sustenance and cloathing: he tells us the temper and seasons of the air, which he several times felt: he relates the inundations which he often saw: he gives an account of their sects, which he learn'd from their priests, or *omsays*,<sup>1</sup> whom he converted to Christianity: he sets down the power and

<sup>1</sup> The term "*omsays*" is an Anglicized plural used by the anonymous author of this introduction for Vietnamese *ông sãi*; see Chapter 2 of Part 2 in Borri where it is spelled "*onsait*" by the translator; in Borri's Italian original, it is spelled "*onsai*". The plural of the second syllable of this expression is given in Baron, Chapter 18, as "*Sayes*"; it might plausibly be argued that what is being transcribed is not *sãi* but rather *thầy*, a term of address meaning "master" and used for monks and teachers, but Baron, in Chapter 18, clearly distinguishes between *sãi* ("*Sayes*" in plural form) and *thầy* (which he spells "thay"). Alexandre de Rhodes, in his seventeenth-century dictionary, identifies *sãi* as "bonze" and describes such people as what we would consider to be "monks"; the same is true in the early nineteenth-century dictionary of Taberd. Alexandre de Rhodes, *Dictionarium Annamiticum, Lusitanum, et Latinum* (Rome: Sac. Congreg. 1651), col. 671. A. J. L. Taberd, *Dictionarium Annamitico-Latinum* (Serampore: J. Marshnam, 1838), p. 435.

government of the kingdom which he could be no stranger to, being familiar with several men in great authority: and to conclude, he particularizes how far the christian faith has been there propagated; which he well knows, as having been himself a labourer in the vineyard for the first five years; and after that, receiving it from those that succeeded him. In fine, the relation is curious, tho' short, and seems to carry all the air of truth imaginable, besides the general approbation it has always received in all parts, which is the greatest commendation that can be given it.

# AN ACCOUNT of COCHIN-CHINA. The FIRST PART.

OF THE  
Temporal State of the Kingdom of *Cochin-China*.

## CHAPTER I.

### OF THE NAME, SITUATION, AND EXTENT OF THIS KINGDOM.

[Name of *Cochin-China*.]<sup>1</sup>

*Cochin-china*, so call'd by the *Portugueses*,<sup>2</sup> is by the natives called *Anam*, signifying a western country, because it lies well west of *China*,<sup>3</sup> for which same reason the *Japaneses*, in their language, give it the name *Cochi*,<sup>4</sup> signifying the same as

<sup>1</sup> The original *Relatione* is not divided into sections. The section titles were added by the translator.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> *Annam* (Annam in Chinese) means "Pacified South." This title was originally applied to the territory of modern northern Vietnam when it became a frontier province of the Tang empire (618-907). Borri's suggestion to explain the term "Annam" by its being west of China is not as absurd as it might seem, for on early European maps northern Vietnam is indeed west of what was known as China, the region of Canton; for example, see the map opposite page one in *Alexandre de Rhodes, Histoire du royaume de Tunquin et des grands progrès que la predication de l'evangile y a faits en la conversion des infidelles, depuis l'année 1627 jusques à l'année*, trans. from Latin by R. P. Henry Albi (Lyon: Jean Baptiste Devenet, 1651). Thus, Borri's apparent error simply reflects a common perception of his time. In the seventeenth century, the Jesuits commonly arrived in the Vietnamese territories after sailing west from Macau.

<sup>4</sup> Usually transcribed as *Koshi* in modern Japanese, from Chinese *Jiaozhi* (Vietnamese *Giaochi*).

*Anam*, in the *Cochi-Chinese* [sic] language. But the *Portugueses*, having, by means of the *Japanese*, been admitted to trade in *Anam*, of the *Japanese* word *Cochi*, and this other word *China*, compounded the name *Cochin-China*, applying it to this kingdom, as if they call'd it *Cochin of China*, the better to distinguish it from *Cochin*, the city in *India*, inhabited by the *Portugueses*; and the reason why, in the maps of the world, we generally find *Cochin-China* set down under the denomination *Cochin-China*, or *Cachina*<sup>5</sup> or the like, is no other but the corruption of the right name, or that the authors of those maps would signify, that this kingdom was the beginning of *China*.

[Its bounds.]

This kingdom, on the south, borders upon that of *Chiampá*,<sup>6</sup> in 11 degrees of north latitude, on the north somewhat inclining eastward toward *Tunchin* [Tonkin],<sup>7</sup> on the east is the *Chinese* Sea, and on the west-northwest the kingdom of *Lais*.<sup>8</sup>

[Extent.]

As to its extent, I shall here speak only of *Cochin-China*, which is part of the great kingdom of *Tunchin*, usurped by a king who was grandfather to him now reigning in *Cochin-China*, who rebelled against the great king of *Tunchin*,<sup>9</sup> for as yet the

<sup>5</sup> Variations in transliteration can be accounted for by a word passing through different languages and by the absence of an established system of transliteration. Speakers of the same language transcribed names they heard differently. We see in Borri's work that the same word now commonly transcribed as Tonkin is transliterated as Tunchin and Tondin on adjacent pages. On Caudin (or Cauchin), see Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais sur les côtes du Viêt-Nam et du Campu: Etude sur les routes maritimes et les relations commerciales, d'après les sources portugaises: XVI, XVII, XVIII siècles* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1972), p. 42, n. 2. For a full discussion of this term, see the Introduction.

<sup>6</sup> Champa was a kingdom that went through many transformations along what is now the central coast of Vietnam, beginning from the second century CE, when it first appeared in Chinese records. The Chams, of Malayo-Polynesian ethnicity and language, received their prevailing cultural influence from the Indian subcontinent rather than from China, which set them apart from the northward-looking Vietnamese. In the fifteenth century, the Chams were defeated by the Vietnamese, and much of their territory was annexed and opened to Vietnamese immigrants. Remaining Cham lands were annexed by the Vietnamese in the seventeenth century.

<sup>7</sup> Borri never went to Tonkin, but he knew it was between Macao and Cochinchina and that he had to go west from Macao to reach Cochinchina, which is apparently why he thinks Tonkin is east of Cochinchina.

<sup>8</sup> The reference is to Laos. In the Italian original, Borri writes Lai, a plural form of the Italian appellation Lao, referring to the people inhabiting this country. The English translation adds an "s."

<sup>9</sup> The ruler of Cochinchina during Borri's time was Nguyễn Phúc Nguyễn, also called Sãi Vnong (ruled 1613-35). The "great king of Tunchin" is apparently a reference to the Mạc kings who ruled from Hanoi during most of the sixteenth century (1527-92). The "grandfather" is Nguyễn Kim (d. 1545) who initiated a movement against the Mạc to restore the Lê dynasty; however he did not, as Borri indicates, "usurp" Cochinchina, for it was after his death that his son Nguyễn Hoàng (1525-1613) shifted the family into the southern frontier and there established what the Europeans called Cochinchina in an area that had been garrisoned by Vietnamese soldiers since the late fifteenth century. When the Nguyễn family eventually established its power there in the late sixteenth century, it was allied with the forces that in the north were fighting the Mạc on behalf of the Lê. For more on this, see K. W. Taylor, "Nguyễn Hoàng and the Beginning of Vietnam's Southward Expansion," in *Southeast Asia in*

*Portugueses* have traded only in this province; and here only the fathers of the society have been conversant, in order to introduce Christianity: yet, at the end of this account, I shall discourse concerning some particulars of *Tunchin*, where our fathers got footing since my return into *Europe*.<sup>10</sup>

*Cochin-China* extends above a hundred leagues along the sea, reckoning from the kingdom of *Chiampá*, in the aforesaid 11 degrees of north latitude, to the gulf of *Annam*,<sup>11</sup> in the latitude of 17 degrees, or thereabouts, where the king of *Tunchin*'s dominions begin.<sup>12</sup> The breadth is not much, being about twenty miles, all the country plain, shut up on the one side by the sea, and on the other by a ridge of mountains inhabited by the Kemois,<sup>13</sup> which signifies a savage people; for tho' they are *Cochin-Chinese*, yet they no way acknowledge or submit to the king, keeping the fastnesses of the uncouth mountains, bordering on the kingdom of *Lais*.

[Division.]

*the Early Modern Era*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 42-65. Borri's statement reflects the following perceptions: first, that Tonkin and Cochinchina were previously one country; second, that rulers of the South were "usurpers"; and third, that the only lawful dynasty in the country was in Tonkin.

<sup>10</sup> The Catholic mission first developed among the Vietnamese in Cochinchina. It was not until March 1626 that Father Giuliano Baldinotti, an Italian Jesuit, with a Japanese lay-brother, Giulio del Piani, went to Tonkin, where they stayed for only about six months, during which they achieved no significant success and finally left for Macao. *Biên Niên Lịch Sử Cổ Trung Đại Việt Nam* (Annals of Ancient Medieval, and Modern History of Vietnam) (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học, 1987), p. 307; A. Bonifacy, *Les débuts du Christianisme en Annam des origines au commencement du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinoise, 192-2), pp. 18-9. The account of Baldinotti under the title *Relazione del viaggio di Tunquino nuovamente scoperto* was published in Rome in 1629. For its translation into French see *Bulletin d'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 3 (1903): 71-78. In 1627, Jesuit Fathers Alexandre de Rhodes and Pedro Marquez or Marques were dispatched to Tonkin to establish a basis for the propagation of Christianity there. They were expelled from Tonkin in 1630, but de Rhodes shortly returned and stayed there until 1633.

<sup>11</sup> The Gulf of Annam is called after the large island (Hainan) that on early European maps is named Annam or Hainam. The common English term today is the Gulf of Tonkin.

<sup>12</sup> The border between the Nguyễn and the Lê at Borri's time was along the Gianh river. Later, the Nguyễn built a wall some short distance south of this river to defend against northern invasions. See L. Cadrière, "Le mur de Đông Hới," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 6 (1906): 87-254.

<sup>13</sup> The reference is to the mountain chain presently called Trường Sơn that composed the western frontier of Cochinchina. *Kẻ Mối*, "uncivilized people," is a vernacular Vietnamese expression applied to the upland minorities in Central Vietnam. An apparent variant of this expression was applied to the mountains inhabited by these people on the map in Alexandre de Rhodes, *Histoire*, where this mountainous region is called *Ru Mối*. The phrase *Ru Mối* also appears at this place on some other early European maps. G. F. Marinii, a Jesuit missionary in Tonkin in the mid-seventeenth century, also refers to the place as *Ru Mối*, "where savage people live, of whom a part obey to two kings of Fire and Water." Gio. Filippo de Marinii, *Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tunquin et de Lao*, tr. L.P.L.C.C. (Paris: Cerrais Clouzier, 1666), p. 35. The meaning of the word *ru* is unclear, and it later disappeared from European maps and accounts, being replaced by *Kẻ Mối*, for example, on de Rhodes's map edited by the Jesuits and found in the later edition (1666) of his work.

*Cochin-China* is divided into five provinces; the first bordering on *Tunchin*, where this king resides, is call'd *Sinuá*,<sup>14</sup> the second *Cachiam*,<sup>15</sup> here the prince, the king's son, resides and governs,<sup>16</sup> the third, *Quangnua*,<sup>17</sup> the fourth *Quignin*, by the *Portugueses* call'd *Pulucambi*,<sup>18</sup> and the fifth, confining on *Champa*, is *Rennin*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> De Rhodes's map lists this province as *Thaoua*, the modern Vietnamese spelling of which is Thuận Hóa, the province where Huế, the Nguyễn capital, was located; the Portuguese called this place *Sinoá* (*Sinuá* here is a misprint; Borri's original spells it *Sinuua* in Chapter 7 of Part I) after the Chinese pronunciation of Thuận Hóa, *shunhua* in Pinyin, transcribed in some early European texts as *Sun-Whua*.

<sup>15</sup> Modern Quảng Nam province. Cachiam, spelled Cacciam in Borri's original, apparently takes its roots from Kê Châm, Kê Chiam, or Kê Chiêm, which, in turn, derives from Vietnamese for Champa, Chiêm Thành. For many centuries, Quảng Nam had been the center of a major Cham kingdom.

<sup>16</sup> Nguyễn Phước Lan (1601-48), known also as Công Thuông Vương (Duke Công Thuông), son of Sài Vương, who succeeded him on his death in 1635.

<sup>17</sup> On the de Rhodes's map it is Quan ghia. In modern orthography it is Quảng Nghĩa or Quảng Ngãi.

<sup>18</sup> De Rhodes's map in *Histoire* indicates it as Quinhin or Pulocambi. The modern spelling for Quinhin is Qui Nhơn. According to Daniello Bartoli, *Dell'Historia Della Compagnia di Gesù, La Cina, Terza Parte, Dell'Asia* (Rome: Nella Stamperia del Varesse, 1663), III:707, Pulocambi is Malay for "Goat Island," in reference to an island shaped like a goat. Today this is Bình Định province, the capital city of which is Qui Nhơn.

<sup>19</sup> Also called Ranran. The name probably derives from the main river Đà Rân. Today this place is the province of Phú Yên.

## CHAPTER II.

# OF THE CLIMATE, AND NATURE OF THE COUNTRY OF COCHIN-CHINA.

[Great heat of India.]

Tho' this kingdom, as has been said, lies between 11 and 17 degrees of north latitude; hence it follows of course, that the country is rather hot than cold, and yet it is not so hot as *India*, tho' it be in the same latitude, and within the torrid zone. The cause of the difference is, because in *India* there is no distinction of the four seasons of the year, so that the summer lasts there nine months without intermission, without seeing so much as a cloud either day or night, and therefore the air is continually, as it were, inflamed with the great reflection of the sun-beams. The other three months are call'd winter, not because there is any want of heat, but because at that time it generally rains day and night; and tho' to appearance, such continual rains should naturally cool the air, yet they falling in the three months of *May, June, and July*, when the sun is in its greatest elevation, and in the zenith of *India*, and no winds blowing but what are hot, the air continues so inflam'd, that sometimes the heat is more intense than in summer, when for the most part there are pleasant winds blowing from the sea, which cool the ground, wherewith, if Almighty God did not relieve those countries, they would be uninhabitable.

[Four seasons in *Cochin-China*.]

But *Cochin-China* enjoying the distinction of the four seasons, tho' not in so perfect a manner as *Europe*, is much more temperate; for tho' its summer, which comprehends the three months of *May, June, and July*, be violent hot, because it lies within the torrid zone, and because the sun is then in its zenith, yet in *September, October, and November*, the autumn season, the heat ceases, and the air becomes very temperate by reason of the continual rains, which at this time usually fall upon the mountains of the *Kemois*, whence the waters running down in abundance do so flood the kingdom, that meeting with the sea, they seem to be all of a piece. These inundations during these three months, for the most part happen once a fortnight, and last three days at a time. They serve not only to cool the air, but to fertilize the earth, making it fruitful and abounding in all things, but particularly in rice, which is the most common and universal food of all the kingdom. During the other three winter months, which are *December, January, and February*, there are cold northerly winds, bringing cool rains, and so sufficiently distinguishing the winter from other seasons. To conclude, in *March, April, and May*, the effects of spring appear, all things being green and blossoming.

## OF THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE COUNTRY.

[Rice.]

It is an easy matter to conceive the fertility of *Cochin-China*, by the advantages accruing from the *Lut*; yet we will mention some other particulars relating to it. The *Lut* leaves the land so fruitful, that rice is gathered three times a year,<sup>1</sup> in such great plenty and abundance, that there is no body will work for gain, all persons having enough to live on plentifully.

[Oranges.]

There are great quantities of fruit of several sorts, all the year about; and they are the same with those in *India*, *Cochin-China* being within the same climate. But to come to particulars; the oranges there are bigger than ours in *Europe*, and very full; the rind of them is thin, tender, and so well tasted, that it is eaten with the juice, which has a pleasant relish like lemons in *Italy*.

[Banana's.]

There is a sort of fruit which the *Portugueses* call *Banana's*, and others *Indian figs*; though, in my judgment, the name of a fig is neither proper to those in *India*, nor in *Cochin-China*, because neither the tree<sup>2</sup> nor the fruit has any resemblance with our figs; the tree being like that we call *Indian wheat*,<sup>3</sup> but higher, and the leaves so long and broad, that two of them would serve to wrap a man in quite round, and from head to feet. Hence some have taken occasion to say, that this was the tree in paradise, with the leaves whereof *Adam* covered himself. This tree at the top produces a cluster of twenty, thirty, or forty of these *Banana's* together; and each of them is in shape, length, and thickness, of an indifferent citron in *Italy*. Before the fruit is ripe, the rind is green, but afterwards yellow, as the citrons are. There is no need of a knife to pare this fruit, for the rind comes off as we shell beans. This fruit has a most fragrant smell; the pith or flesh of it is yellow, and firm, like that of a

<sup>1</sup> First, *lúa mia* (seasonal rice); second, rice, that develops within three months, hence the name *lúa ba giting* (rice of three moons) or *lúa chiem* (fifth-month rice); and third, *lúa thing* (beated rice). See Ch. Crevost and Ch. Lemarié, *Catalogue des produits de l'Indochine* (Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extreme-Orient, 1917), 1:24-5.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, strictly speaking, bananas are herbaceous plants and not trees, as they do not have a wooden trunk but a stem.

<sup>3</sup> The original calls it Turkish wheat; Cristoforo Borri, *Relazione della nuova missione delli PP. della Compagnia de Gesu, al Regno della Cocinchina* (Rome: F. Catanto, 1631), p. 14.

*bergamot* pear,<sup>4</sup> when full ripe, that melts in the mouth. By this it appears to be no way like our fig, except in the taste and sweetness.<sup>5</sup> There is another sort of them, which is only eaten roasted, and with wine: the stem dies every year, when it has produced the fruit, and leaves a young sprout at the foot, which grows up against the next year.<sup>6</sup> That which in *Italy* they call an *Indian fig*, is nothing like the plant, or fruit of this *Banana* we now speak of; nor is this which we have in *Italy* called an *Indian fig*, in those parts.<sup>7</sup> This fruit is common throughout all *India*. There is another sort in *Cochin-China*, that is not found in *China*, nor *India*: It is as big as the largest citrons we have in *Italy*, so that one of them is enough to satisfy a man. These are nourishing, very white within, and full of black round seeds, which chew'd together with the white substance, are of a delicious taste, and a good medicine against the flux.<sup>8</sup>

[Can.]

There is another fruit in *Cochin-China*, which I have not seen in any other country of *India*, and this they call *Can*; the outward form and nature is like our pomegranate; but within it contains a substance almost liquid, which is taken out, and eaten with a spoon; the taste is aromatic, and the colour like that of a ripe medlar.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> It seems that Borri refers here to bergamot orange, or *Citrus bergamia*, which originated in South Italy, because bergamot pear, a winter pear, was cultivated mainly in England and could hardly be familiar to Borri. Bergamot orange, however, is also a pear-shaped fruit. It has been used also for extraction of oil, which, because of its fragrant smell, has been widely used in perfume production.

<sup>5</sup> The description fits that of *chuối mít* (Musa nana) or *chuối tiêu* (Musa paradisiaca).

<sup>6</sup> *Chuối sít*.

<sup>7</sup> As it is, this sentence seems obscure. In Italian, it reads: "Questo, che qui in Italia si chiama Fico d'India non ha da fare, nè con la pianta, nè con frutto con queste banane, delle quali noi hora parliamo, anzi che ne anche questo, che si troua in Italia in quelle parti è chiamato fico d'India." Borri, *Relazione della nuova missione delli PP. della Compagnia de Gesu*, pp. 15-16. "This, which is called an Indian fig in Italy has nothing in common with either a plant or a fruit of this banana, of which we are speaking now; moreover, what is found in Italy is not called an Indian fig in this region [Cochinchina]."

<sup>8</sup> Borri, apparently, refers to *chuối hột*, the biggest among the species of bananas in Cochinchina. It has red-greenish skin and retains its seeds. Crevost and Lemarié, *Catalogues*, 1: 275.

<sup>9</sup> The word *Can* used by Borri is not associated with any known fruit at the present time and is not used in other accounts. We can try to infer what he meant only by comparing his information with other possible fruits: their form and nature (pomegranate), substance (liquid), and color (medlar). Medlar, while unripe and even when picked from the tree, retains a yellow-greenish color, but as it becomes ripe through the months-long process of fermentation in a cool place, its pulp becomes extremely soft and its color changes to golden-brown. Bonifacy suggested to see in this *can* a "passion fruit," which according to him the Vietnamese call *đũa gan lầy*, which Borri corrupted into *can*. Bonifacy identifies it as *Passiflora guianensis*, which in English means "giant granddilla." A. Bonifacy, *Les débuts du Christianisme en Annam des origines au commencement du 18e siècle* (Hanoi: Imprimerie Tonkinoise, 192-7), p. 20. This fruit might reach one foot in diameter, thus exceeding the "outward nature" of pomegranate, to which Borri compared it. It has a yellow color. Passion fruit, or *quả lựu tiên*, indeed has glutinous juicy fragrant pulp with numerous seeds. The Vietnamese translators of Borri, puzzled by this *can*, are more inclined to consider the option that this may be a reference to dragon fruit (*thanh long*): see Cristoforo Borri, *Xứ Đàng Trong Nam 1621* (Cochinchina. Year 1621), trans. Hồng Nhuệ, Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên, Nguyễn Nghi

[Gnoo.]

They have another peculiar to the country, that grows, and is like our cherries, but tastes like raisins, and is call'd *gnoo*.<sup>10</sup>

[Melons.]

There are also melons, but not so good as ours in *Europe*; nor are they eaten without sugar or honey. The water-melons are large and delicate.

[Giacca.]

There is a large fruit they call *giacca*,<sup>11</sup> which is common in other parts of *India*, but much larger in *Cochin-China*: It grows on a tree as high as the walnut, or chestnut,

(Hochiminh: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1998), p. 22, fn. 1. This is not very plausible, because dragon fruit, although comparable to pomegranate in its shape, is of red color, and its "substance" is not as liquid as that of the passion fruit. Furthermore, I was informed that *thanh long* appeared in South Vietnam only recently. Thus, I am inclined to agree with Bonifacy's opinion. It is possible, however, that Borri refers not to *Passiflora quadrangularis* but to some other kind of the 120 species comprising the Passifloraceae family, several of which existed in Cochinchina. The passion fruit got its name from its flower, which is not related, as commonly assumed, to "amorous" qualities of the fruit, but rather reflects Christ's passion and passion for Christ. The first European missionaries who discovered the plant in Latin America saw in the structure of the plant the iconography of Christ's crucifixion (nails, crown of thorns, etc.).

<sup>10</sup> *Nho* in modern Vietnamese orthography. It has come to signify "vine" or "grapes." Borri definitely does not recognize Cochinchinese grapes as grapes with which he was acquainted in Europe, as is seen from his statement. Moreover, further in the text he directly says that there were no grapes in Vietnam. On the other hand, Crevoisi and Lemaire at the beginning of the twentieth century list grapes among the fruits of Cochinchina and apply the same word, *nho*, to them. Crevoisi and Lemaire, *Catalogues*, 1219-20. Thus, there are two possibilities. First, the berries that Borri saw were indeed grapes but they looked different from what he knew as grapes. Or, they were not grapes, and real grapes appeared in Cochinchina only later, brought there by Europeans. If that were the case, what then might this *gnoo* refer to? We might plausibly assume that it refers to one of the species from the Sapindaceae family, among which we find mangosteen, genips, longans, and lychees. All of them have some of the features described by Borri. Probably, even though mangosteen, also known as "queen of fruits," has a purple color, grape-like taste, and is native to Southeast Asia, we should exclude it from the list of possibilities due to its tennis-ball size and segmented, tangerine-like structure, which does not exactly correspond to Borri's comparison to cherries. Genips, while having a grape-like taste and a consistency similar to cherries, is green and is not "peculiar" to Vietnam but rather to other parts of the world. Lychee, although grown in northern Vietnam, was not found in central or southern Vietnam, according to Crevoisi and Lemaire, *Catalogues*, 1: 221. Thus, only longan (*long nhân* in Vietnamese, meaning "dragon's eye" or also called simply *nhân*) is left to fit Borri's description. Longans do resemble the shape of cherries, they have a pit similar to cherries, and they grow on a tree, not on a vine like grapes do. It should be noted that by the time Alexandre de Rhodes published his dictionary in 1651, only two decades after Borri's work, *nho* had become identical to the meaning we employ now, as we find in his dictionary: "*nho*: vitis sylvestris" (wild vine, wild grape). See Alexandre de Rhodes, *Từ Điển Annam-Latin-Latinh* (Annamite-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary), ed. and trans. Thanh Lăng et al. (Hochiminh City: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1991), col. 553.

<sup>11</sup> The jackfruit is native to India, from where it traveled to other parts of Asia, including Cochinchina. The appellation takes its roots from the Malayalam word *catka*, later apparently

and has much longer prickles than the *jubeb*.<sup>12</sup> It is as big as a very large pompon [pumpkin] in *Italy*, so that one of them is a man's load. The out-rind is like that of a pine-apple, but soft and tender within. This fruit is full of certain yellow round kernels, like a small piece of coin, that is round and flat; and in the middle of every one of them, is a stone that is thrown away. There are two sorts of this fruit; one in *Portuguese* is call'd a *giacca barra*. The stone of this is thrown away, and the pulp is stiff; they do not take out the stone of the other; nor is the pulp hard, but soft as glue;<sup>13</sup> both these in taste somewhat resemble that delicious fruit called the *durion*, whereof we shall speak next.

[Durion.]

This *durion* is one of the most delicious fruits in the world, and found only in *Malacca*, *Borneo*, and the adjacent islands. The tree differs little from the *giacca* last mentioned, and the fruit itself is like it without, and that resembles the pine-apple, even in the hardness of the rind. The meat within is very white about the bone, to which it sticks like glue, and tastes very much like our *mangiar bianco* (a dainty among the *Italians*).<sup>14</sup> This meat and liquor is divided into ten or twelve little apartments, in each of which the flesh and moisture is about its stone, which is as big as a large chestnut. And it is to be observ'd, that when they break open the shell of this fruit, there comes from it an ill scent, like that of a rotten onion, all the substance within remaining of a most sweet and inexpressible flavor; whereupon I will relate what happened in my presence: a prelate arrived at *Malacca*, and one there opened a *durion* before him to give him a taste; the prelate was so offended at that nauseous smell that came from it when broke, that he would not taste it by any means. Being afterwards set down to dinner, they gave the rest of the company *mangiar bianco*, but on this prelate's plate they laid the white substance of this fruit, which is so like the *mangiar bianco*, that he could not distinguish the difference by the sight. The prelate tasted it, and thought it so much more delicious than usual, that he ask'd, what cook dress'd it so rarely? Then he that had invited him to dinner, smiling, told him, It was no other cook but God himself, who had produc'd that fruit, which was the very *durion* he would not taste. The prelate was so astonished, that he thought he could never eat enough; and they so dear, that even at *Malacca*, where they grow, they sometimes cost a crown apiece.

corrupted by the Portuguese into *jaka*. Its weight can be as much as ninety pounds, its rind is covered with numerous spines. The fruit is considered a great delicacy.

<sup>12</sup> Borri refers here to jujube, a Chinese date, which spread all over the world and is a delicious sweet fruit. While the fruit has a very thin and edible skin, the tree, on which the fruits grow, is often very thorny.

<sup>13</sup> *Qia mit mui* and *qia mit giui* respectively.

<sup>14</sup> Or "Bianco Mangiare" (literally "to eat white"), which is a delicious old Italian dessert prepared of all white ingredients: sugar, milk, ground almonds, and egg whites.



[Ananas,]<sup>15</sup>

*Cochín-China* abounds in another sort of fruit, by the *Portugueses* call'd *ananas*; which tho' it be common in all *India*, and *Brazile*, yet because I have not found it well describ'd by those that have writ of it, I would not pass it by. The fruit does not grow on a tree, nor from a seed, but on a stalk, like our artichokes, and the stem and leaves are much like those of the thistle or artichoke. The fruit is like a cylinder, a span long, and so thick that it requires both hands to grasp it. The pulp within is close, and like a radish, the rind somewhat hard, scaly like a fish. When ripe, it is yellow both within and without, is par'd with a knife, and eaten raw, the taste of it an eager sweet, and as soft as a full ripe *bergamot* pear.

[Areca.]

There is besides, in *Cochín-China*, a fruit peculiar to that country, which the *Portugueses* call *areca*. The trunk of it is as strait [straight] as a palm-tree, hollow within, and produces leaves like those of the palm, only at the top among these leaves, there grow some small boughs, which bear the fruit in shape and bigness like a walnut, green without, just as the nut is; within it is white and hard like a chestnut, and has no taste at all. This fruit is not eaten alone, but is wrapp'd up in leaves of *betle* [betel], well known in *India*, which are like our ivy-leaves in *Europe*, and the plant itself clings to trees like the ivy. These leaves are cut in pieces, and in them they wrap a bit of *areca*, each of them making four or five morsels; and with the *areca* they put some lime, which is not there made of stone, as in *Europe*, but of oyster-shells; and as among us there are cooks and caterers, & c. so in *Cochín-China* there is one in every family, whose business is to wrap up these morsels of *areca* in *betle*, and these persons being commonly women, are call'd *Betleres*. They fill their boxes with these morsels, and chew them all day, not only when they are at home, but when they are walking or talking, at all times, and in all places, never swallowing, but spitting them out when they are well chew'd, retaining nothing but the relish and virtue of it, which wonderfully comforts the stomach. These morsels are so much in use, that when one of them goes to make a visit, he carries a box full of them, and presently presents some to the party visited, who claps it into his mouth, and before the visitor departs, he that is visited sends to his *Betler* woman for a box of the same, and presents it to the visitor, to return his kindness; and these morsels must be still making. And there is so much of this *areca* us'd, that the greatest revenues of that country come from the fields of it, as among us of olive-gardens, and the like.

[Other growth.]

*Tobacco* is also us'd there, but not so much as *betle*. The country also abounds in all sorts of pumpions<sup>16</sup> and sugar canes. The *European* fruits are not yet come thither;

<sup>15</sup> Pineapple. The Europeans first discovered it on the coast of Brazil, where it was called "anana," which in the indigenous language meant an "excellent" or "fragrant" fruit. The name subsequently entered Portuguese, French, and Italian. The Spaniards, however, created a new appellation based on the shape of the fruit—"pina," from "pinecone"—and the English language elaborated on the Spanish name, adding the word "apple" to it.

<sup>16</sup> Another variant spelling of the aforementioned word *pompion*, that is, pumpkin.

but I believe grapes and figs would take very well. Our herbs, as lettuce [lettuce], endive, colworts, and the like, come up well in *Cochín-China*, as they do throughout all *India*. But they all grow into leaf, without producing any seed, so that it must still be supplied out of *Europe*.

[Cattle and fowl.]

There is also plenty of flesh, by reason of the great multitude not only of tame cattle, as cows, goats, swine, butaloes, and the like; but of wild, such as deer, much bigger than those of *Europe*, wild boars, & c. and of hens both tame and wild, of which sort the fields are full, turtles, pigeons, ducks, geese, and cranes, which are savory enough; and in short, other sorts, which we have not in *Europe*.

[Fish.]

Their fishery is very great, and fish so delicious, that tho' I have travell'd so many countries, I do not think I have met with any to compare to that of *Cochín-China*. And the country, as was said before, lying all along upon the sea, there are so many boats to go out a fishing, and they bring in so much fish to all parts of the kingdom, that it is really very remarkable to see the long rows of people continually carrying fish from the shore to the mountains; which is duly done every day, for four hours before sun-rising.<sup>17</sup>

[Balachiam.]

And tho' generally among the *Cochín-Chinese*, fish is more valu'd than flesh, yet the main reason why they apply themselves so much to fishing, is to furnish themselves with a kind of sauce, which they call *balachiam*,<sup>18</sup> which is made of salt

<sup>17</sup> The part of the sentence—"which is duly done every day, for four hours before sun-rising"—is not an exact translation of the original, which reads: "il che infallibilmente si sa ogni giorno dalle vent' hore, fino alle vent-quattro" (Borri, *Relazione*, pp. 23-24) and should be literally translated as "which is done without fail each day from the twentieth hour to the twenty-fourth hour." While it is possible that the translation simplifies the phrase and just refers to the night time as "four hours before sun-rising," Bonifacy states that the time was counted in Italy starting from the evening at 6 pm and all Catholic offices used to follow it. In which case "from the twentieth to the twenty-fourth hour" will coincide with the time range of 2 pm to 6 pm. (Bonifacy, *Les debuts*, p. 295, n. 26). However, it is not clear who is right here. Bonifacy obviously refers to the "Divine Office" or "Catholic hours," prayers required to be recited by clergy during certain hours of the day. The day was divided into a night watch ("Vigil," between 6 pm and 6 am) and a day watch ("Matins," from 6 am to 6 pm), but the first hour, Prime or *prima hora*, is considered to be at 6 am, apparently because night prayers were gradually co-joined with the day prayers. If we count from 6 am, the time indicated by Borri will be between 2 am and 6 am. But we really do not know what count he used, and I could not locate any supporting evidence from other sources.

<sup>18</sup> The reference is definitely to the famous Vietnamese condiment *nước mắm*. While Borri calls *nước mắm* "balachiam," William Dampier, who visited Tonkin in 1688, distinguishes between "balachiam" and *nước mắm*: "Balachiam is a Composition of a strong Savour; yet a very delightful Dish to the Natives of this Country. To make it, they throw the Mixture of Shrimps and small Fish into a Sort of weak Pickle made with Salt and Water, and put it into a tight earthen Vessel or Jar. The Pickle being thus weak, it keeps not the Fish firm and hard, neither is it probably so designed, for the Fish are never gutted. Therefore in a short Time they turn all to a Mash in the Vessel; and when they have lain thus a good while, so that the Fish is

fish macerated and steep'd in water. This is a sharp liquor, not unlike mustard, whereof every body lays in such store, that they fill barrels and tubs of it, as many in *Europe* lay in their stocks of wine. This of itself is no food, but serves to sharpen the appetite to the rice, which they cannot eat without it. For this reason, tho' rice be the general and most common sustenance in *Cochin-China*, there must be vast quantities of *balachiam*, without which it is not eaten, and consequently there is continual fishing. There is no less plenty of shellfish, oysters, and other product of the sea, especially of one sort, which they call *cameron*.<sup>19</sup>

Besides all this, providence has furnish'd them with a sort of food so rare and delicate, that in my opinion it may be compar'd to the *mana*, wherewith the chosen people of God were fed in the desert. This is so peculiar to *Cochin-China*, that it is nowhere else to be found: and I will give an account of what I know of it by experience, and not by hear-say, having seen and eaten of it several times.

[Wonderful nests.]

In this country there is found a small bird like a swallow, which fastens its nest to the rocks, the sea-waves break against. This little creature with its beak, takes up some foam of the sea, and mixing it with a certain moisture it draws from its own stomach, makes a sort of slime, or bituminous substance, which serves to build its nest, which when dry and hardened, remains transparent, and of a colour between green and yellow. The country people gather these nests, and being soften'd in water, they serve to season meat, whether fish, flesh, herbs, or any sort whatsoever, and give every thing so different a relish, and so proper to it, as if they had been season'd with pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and the richest spice: this nest alone being enough to season all sorts of provisions, without salt, oil, bacon, or any other addition; and therefore I said I thought it like manna, which had in it the taste of all the most delicious meats; saving that this is the work of a small bird, and that was made by God's angels. And such great store of them is found, that I myself saw ten small boats laden with nests, taken among the rocks, in not above a mile's distance. But they being so precious a commodity, only the king deals in them, they being all kept for him; and his greatest vent<sup>20</sup> is to the king of *China*, who values them at a great rate.

They eat no sort of white meats,<sup>21</sup> looking upon it as a sin to milk the cows, or other creatures: and the reason they give for this nicety is, that milk was by nature

reduced to a Pap, they then draw off the Liquor into fresh jars, and preserve it for use. The mash Fish that remains behind is called *Balachiam*, and the Liquor pour'd off is called *Nike-mum*. The poor People eat the *Balachiam* with their Rice. 'Tis rank-scented, yet the Taste is not altogether unpleasant; but rather savory, after one is a little used to it. The *Nike-mum* is of a pale brown Colour, inclining to grey; and pretty clear. It is also very savory and used as a good Sauce for Fowls, not only by the Natives, but also by many *Europeans*, who esteem it equal with *Soy*. William Dampier, "Mr. Dampier's Voyages, Vol. II. Part I: His voyage from Adhin in Sumatra, to Tunquin, and other Places in the East-Indies," in *A Collection of Voyages, in Four Volumes* (London: James and John Knapton, 1729), II:28. Bontacy, *Les débus*, p. 296, n. 27, suggests to look for the roots of the appellation *balachiam* in the Cham name for it, *batralank* or *batralank*.

<sup>19</sup> I suppose this to be the *Portuguese* word *camerano*, signifying shrimps or prawns.

<sup>20</sup> In the original it says "spaccia" (p. 26) from the verb "spacciare" (to sell), thus, the meaning is "sale."

<sup>21</sup> Butter or cheese.

appointed for sustenance of the young ones: as if the owner of the young ones could not dispose of their sustenance.

[Camelions eaten.]

They eat some things which we loath, and count venomous, as camelions, which are here somewhat bigger than those that are sometimes brought dry'd up into *Italy*, out of the other countries. I saw a friend buy some ly'd together in a cluster, and lay them upon the live coals, which having burn'd the string, they walk'd about gently, as they used to do till they felt the heat of the fire; which being a violent cold nature, they resisted a-while, but were at last broil'd: my friend took them up, and scraping off the burn'd skin with a knife, the flesh remain'd extraordinary white; then he bruise'd and boil'd them in a certain sort of sauce like butter, and then eat them as a great dainty, inviting me to bear him company: but I had enough with the sight of it.

[All wear silk.]

*Cochin-China* abounds in all other things necessary for the support of human life; and in the first place for clothing: there is such plenty of silk, that the peasants and mechanicks<sup>22</sup> generally wear it; so that I was often pleas'd to see men and women at their labour, carrying stone, earth, lime, or the like, without the least fear of spoiling or tearing the rich clothes they had on. Nor will they wonder at it, who shall know, that the mulberry-trees, whose leaves feed the silk-worms, grow in vast plains, as hemp does among us, and run up as fast; so that in a few months the said worms appear upon them, and feed in the open air, spinning their thread at the proper time, and winding their bottoms in such plenty, that the *Cochin-Chinenses* have not only enough for their own uses, but they furnish *Japan*, and send it to the kingdom of *Lais*, whence it afterwards spreads as far as *Tiber*; this silk being not so fine and soft, but stronger and more substantial than that of *China*.

[Buildings.]

The structures the *Cochin-Chinenses* use of wood, are nothing inferior to those of any other part of the world; for without falsifying this country has the best timber in the universe, in the opinion of all that have been there to this time.

[Incorruptible trees called *Tin*.]<sup>23</sup>

Among the variety and multitude of their trees, there are two that most usually serve for building, and are so incorruptible, that they do not decay in the least, either under ground, or under water; and they are so solid and heavy, that they do not swim upon the water, and a log of them serves instead of an anchor to a ship. One of them is black, but not so as ebony; the other is red, and both of them, when the bark is taken off are so smooth and slick, that they scarce need any planing. These trees are call'd *Tin*, and they would not deviate much from the truth, who should say, they were that incorruptible wood, which *Solomon* made use of for building the temple:

<sup>22</sup> The original reads "zappatori e manovali." Borri, *Relatione*, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Ironwood.



for we know the scripture gives them a name much like this, calling them *ligua thyna*.<sup>24</sup> The mountains of *Cochin-China* are all full of these trees, all strait, of such a prodigious height, that they seem to touch the clouds, and so thick that two men cannot fathom them. Of this timber the *Cochin-Chinenses* build their houses, every man being free to cut down as many as he pleases.

[The houses.]

The whole fabric of their houses rests upon high, solid and well settled pillars, between which they place boards to remove at pleasure; either to exchange them for cane-lattices, which they weave neatly, to let in the air in hot weather; or to leave free a passage for the water and boats, at the time of the inundation, as we observed above. They also have a thousand curious inventions, and ingenious contrivances to set off their houses, with carving, and other works on wood, which are a very great ornament.

[Aquila, and Calamba, odoriferous wood.]

Since we have begun to talk of the trees, before we proceed upon any other matter, I will here mention something of a sort of wood, accounted the richest commodity that can be carried out of *Cochin-China* to other parts; which is the most famous wood called *Aquila*, or Eagle-wood,<sup>25</sup> and *Calamba*,<sup>26</sup> which are the same thing as to the tree, but differ in their value and vertue.<sup>27</sup> Of these trees, which are thick and high enough, the *Kemnis* mountains are very full; if the wood be cut off a young tree, it proves *Aquila*, or Eagle-wood, and this there is most plenty of, every one cutting as much as he can: but when the wood is of an old tree, that proves *Calamba*; which were very hard to be found, had not nature itself provided for it, causing these same trees to grow on the tops of inaccessible mountains, where growing old without being exposed to destruction, some boughs of them now and then drop down, breaking off, either for want of moisture, or through age, and are therefore found rotten and worm-eaten, infinitely exceeding the common *Aquila* or Eagle-wood, in vertue and sweet scent; and this is the so highly valued and famous *Calamba*. The *Aquila* is sold by any body, but the *Calamba* belongs only to the king, because of the high value of its perfume and vertue. And to say the truth, it is so sweet where they gather it, that some pieces being presented me, for a trial, I buried them above a yard and a half under ground, and yet they discovered themselves by their fragrantcy. The *Calamba*, where taken, is worth five ducats a pound, but in the port of *Cochin-China*, where the trade is, it bears a much greater price, and is not sold under sixteen ducats a pound. In *Japan* it is worth two hundred ducats a pound, but if there be a piece big enough for a man to lay his head on like a pillow, the *Japaneses*

<sup>24</sup> *Ligna Timea* in the original (Borri, *Relatione*, p. 29). Vulgate 2 Chronicles, 9:11 reads: "de quibus fecit rex de lignis scilicet thyinis gradus in domo Domini et in domo regia..." "The king made of the alumn trees terraces for the house of Yahweh, and for the king's house..." Alumn, or sometimes alnug, probably refers to the sandalwood tree. The Vietnamese translation for this term in the *Chronicles* is *đàn hương*. Borri possibly refers here to *Pterocarpus santalinus* or to *Adenanthera Pavonina*, which is taller than the former. Both can be used for construction.

<sup>25</sup> *Lignum aquile*, one of the less famous species of the *Tymnaceae* (aloe) family.

<sup>26</sup> *Aquilaria agalocdia* or *Aquilaria malaccensis*, or aloe wood, a very rare and expensive tree.

<sup>27</sup> i.e. "virtue," meaning qualities.

will give after the rate of three or four hundred ducats a pound: the reason of it is, because they instead of a soft down-pillow, when they sleep, lay their head on some hard thing, and generally it is a piece of wood, which everyone, according to his ability, endeavours to have of as great value as he can; and a piece of *Calamba* is looked upon as a pillow fit for none but a king, or some great lord. Yet the *Aquila*, though of less price and esteem than the *Calamba*, is so considerable, that one ship's load of it enriches any merchant for ever: and the best advantage the king can allow the governor of *Malacca*, is to grant him one voyage of *Aquila*; because the *Brachmans* [Brahmans] and *Banians*<sup>28</sup> of *India* using to burn their dead with this sweet wood, the consumption of it is continually very great.

[Great wealth of *Cochin-China*.]

To conclude, *Cochin-China* abounds in rich mines of the most precious metals, especially of gold; and to reduce to a few words, what might be said more at large on the plenty of this country, I will conclude with that which the European merchants trading thither commonly say of it; which is, that in some measure the wealth of *Cochin-China* is greater than that of *China* itself; and we all know how rich that country is in all respects.

I ought in this place to say something of the beasts, whereof we before observed there was great variety and numbers in *Cochin-China*; but that I might not dilate too much, I will only treat of the elephants and abadas,<sup>29</sup> or rhinoceros's, chiefly found here; of which many curious things may be said, which perhaps very many have not heard of.

<sup>28</sup> Also spelled *bania* or *baniga*, the word refers to one the Indian castes, a majority of whose members are occupied with trade or moneylending. They usually follow Vishnism or Jainism, observing a strict vegetarian diet and believing in the transmigration of souls. The *banians* were a wonder for the Europeans when they discovered them. One of the Europeans working in India in the eighteenth century, in a lengthy tractate on the *banians*, whom he mistakenly calls a "sect" instead of a "caste," mentioned also their burial rituals: "First, they bear the dead body to a river's side appropriate to such purpose, where, setting the corps downe on the ground, ... After this, putting combustible matter to the body, accended and lighted by the help of sweete oyle, and aromatical odours strewed thereon." See Henry Lord, "A Discussion of Two Foreign Company Sects in the East-Indies; viz. The Sect of the Banians, the Antient [sic] Natives of India and the Sect of the Persees, the Ancient Inhabitants of Persia," in *A Collection of voyages and Travels*, ed. Awnsham Churchill (London: John Walthoe et al., 1732), vol. 6, p. 319. Given the importance ascribed in this description to aroma during the funeral, we can see that aquila was a valuable commodity for them.

<sup>29</sup> Portuguese for "rhinoceros."

## OF THE ELEPHANTS AND ABADAS, OR RHINOCERO'S.

[Elephants, their age.]

There are abundance of elephants in the woods of *Cochin-China*, which they make no use of, because they know not how to take, or tame them: therefore they bring them tame and well taught from *Cambogia*, a neighboring kingdom. These are twice as big as those of *India*, the round print of their feet they leave behind them, is not less than half a yard diameter; the two teeth striking out of the mouth, whereof ivory is made, are very often four yards and a half long; that is, those of the males, for those of the females are much shorter; by which it is easy to compute, how much those elephants of *Cochin-China* are bigger than those shewn about in *Europe*, whose teeth are not above three quarters of a yard long. The elephants live many years; and I asking, How old one might be? the driver of it told me, It was sixty years old before it came from *Cambogia*, and had lived forty [years] in *Cochin-China*: and having myself several times travelled upon elephants in that kingdom, I can relate many things that will seem strange, but yet are very true.

[They carry by land and water.]

An elephant generally carries thirteen or fourteen persons, who are thus disposed of; as we lay a saddle on a horse, so they clasp a certain machine upon the elephant, which is like a coach, wherein there are four seats; it is fastened with chains under the elephant's belly, as a horse's saddle is girt. The coach has two doors on the sides, where six persons sit, three on a side; and another behind, where there are two more; and lastly, the *mayre*,<sup>1</sup> who supplies the place of a coachman, sits over the elephant's head, and guides him. Nor have I travelled in this manner by land only, but very often by sea too, crossing arms of it above a mile over: and it was wonderful to any body that knew it not before, to see such a vast great lump of flesh swimming under such a weight, so that it look'd like a boat rowing. True it is, the beast groan'd under the toil, occasioned by the unreasonable bulk of its own body, and the difficulty of breathing; and therefore to ease itself in that pain, it sucked in water with the trunk, and spouted it out so high, that it look'd like some great whale gliding across the ocean.

<sup>1</sup> *Mayre*, variously *Nagar* or *Nair*, refers to a caste of rulers and warriors, in what is now the state of Kerala on the Malabar coast of southwest India, that was encountered by Europeans beginning in the sixteenth century. Here, Borri uses this term for "mahout."

[They help up passengers.]

For the same reason of its mighty corpulency, it finds much difficulty in stooping down; and this being absolutely necessary for the convenience of passengers to get up to, or down from the coach, he does it not but when commanded by the *mayre*, and if when he is kneeling, any one stops but never so little, upon ceremony, or any other account, he rises up, not having patience to continue in that posture, it is so painful.

Nor is it less wonderful to behold, how at the *mayre's* command he makes, as it were, a ladder of his limbs, for the greater convenience of those that are to get up into the coach: the first step is his foot, which is high enough; for the second, he turns out the first joint above the same foot, distant enough from the other; for the third he bends his knee; for the fourth, his hip-bone, sticking out to that purpose; and from whence, he that gets up, lays hold of a chain fastened to the coach itself, where he seats himself.

[How they sleep.]

By this it plainly appears, how much they are mistaken, who say and write, that the elephant can neither kneel nor bow down; and that the only way to take him, is to cut the tree he leans against to sleep: for that falling together with the false support, and not being able to rise, he becomes a certain prey to him that lies in wait: which is all a fable, though it be true that he lies not down to sleep, that being an uneasy posture to him, as has been said, but sleeps always standing, with a continual agitation of his head.

[Their vast strength.]

Upon occasion of war or battle, they take off the roof of the coach, whence, as it were from a tower, the soldiers fight with muskets, arrows, and sometimes a small piece of cannon, the elephant being strong enough to carry it, his strength being answerable to all the rest: and I have been on one myself, that would carry vast weights upon his trunk; and another that lifted up a great piece of cannon with it; and another, who by himself launch'd ten galliots one after another, taking hold of them very dexterously with his teeth, and shoving them into the sea. I have seen others pull up large trees with as much ease as we do a cabbage or a lettuce: with the same ease they throw down houses, leveling whole streets when they are commanded, either to do harm to an enemy in war, or to stop the fury of the flames upon occasion of any fire.

[The trunk.]

The trunk's length is proportionable to the height of the rest of his body, so that he can take up any thing off the ground with it without stooping. It is made of abundance of small sinews knit together, which makes it so pliable, that he can take up the least thing, and yet so strong and firm as we have shewn.

All the body is covered with a rough ash-colour skin. An elephant's usual day's journey is twelve leagues, and his motion has the same effect upon those that are not used to it, as that of a ship has at sea.

[Great sense of the elephant.]

I shall say nothing more wonderful concerning the elephant's docility, or aptness to learn, than what is generally reported; by which it will appear, there was reason to say, *No beast was more sensible than the elephant*,<sup>3</sup> for it does such things as seem to be the acts of prudence and understanding. In the first place, though the *mayre* makes use of a certain instrument of iron a yard long, which has a hook at one end, wherewith he strikes and punches him, that he may be watchful, and mind what he bids him do, yet for the most part, he governs him only by words; by which it appears he understands the language very well; and some of them understand three or four that are very different according to the several countries they have lived in. Thus he that I travelled on, seemed to understand the language of *Cambogia*, whence he came, and that of *Cochin-China*, where he was. And who would not admire to hear the *mayre* discourse with his elephant, tell him the way and road he is to take, what place he is to pass by, what inn they are to lie at, what they shall there find to eat, and in short, give him an exact account of all that is to be done during the journey? and to see the elephant perform what he expects from him, as regularly as any man of good sense could do; insomuch, that when the elephant seems to have understood what place he was to go to, he takes the shortest cut to it, without minding the beaten road, rivers, woods, or mountains, but goes on, not doubting to overcome all difficulties, as in effect he does; for if any rivers be in the way, he either fords or swims them; if woods, he breaks the boughs of the trees, pulls them up whole, or cuts them with a sharp iron like a scythe, which to this purpose is fastened to the fore-part of the top of the coach, wherewith upon occasion having first laid hold of the boughs, he cuts them with his trunk, and makes himself way, cutting through the thickest forest, where it is easily known to have been an elephant that made the way; and all this he does with great ease and expedition, in obedience to the *mayre*.

[The elephant understands what is said.]

One only thing disturbs this creature, and puts it to great pain, which is, when a thorn, or such like thing, runs into the bottom of his foot, which is extraordinary soft and tender, and therefore he treads very cautiously, when he goes thro' places where there may be danger of such an accident. I went a journey once with seven or eight elephants in a company, and heard the *mayres*, every one warn his own beast, to look out carefully where he set his feet; for they were to pass over a sandy place about a mile in length, where thorns grew up among the sand; upon this intimation all the elephants held down their heads, and looking out, as it were, for some small thing that is lost, they walk'd that mile very cautiously, step by step, till being told there was no more to fear, they lifted up their heads, going on as they had done at first. Being come at night to the inn, the *mayres* sent the elephants to the wood to feed, without taking the coach off their backs; and I asking, why they did not take it down, they answer'd, That the elephants fed on the boughs of trees, and therefore they left the coach on their backs, that they might cut them with that iron we said was before it. The next day being come, where there was no wood, every *mayre* carried a large

<sup>2</sup> i.e. "clever."<sup>3</sup> In the original this phrase is in Latin: "Elephantus belluarum nulla prudentior." Christoforo Borri, *Relazione*, p. 38.

bundle of green boughs for his elephant. I took particular satisfaction to observe one, who more nimbly than the rest, laying hold of those boughs with his trunk, barked them with his teeth, and then eat them up as quick, and with as good a gust, as we would a fig, or any other sort of fruit. Discouraging the next day with my fellow-travelers, who were about twenty, I told them, how much I was pleased to see that elephant eat the boughs so cleverly. Then the *mayre*, by order of the elephant's master, called him by his name, which was *Grim*, he being at some distance, but presently lifted up his head to give ear to what was said to him. Remember, said the *mayre*, that father, the passenger that looked upon you yesterday, when you was eating; take such a bough as one of them was, and come before him, as you did yesterday. No sooner had the *mayre* spoke the words, but the elephant came before me with a bough in his trunk, singing me out among all the company, shew'd it me, bark'd, and eat it; then inclining himself very low, he went away, as it were, laughing, making signs of joy and satisfaction; leaving me full of astonishment, to see that a beast should be so apt to understand, and do what it was commanded. Yet the elephant is obedient to none but the *mayre*, or his master: and he will only endure to see them get upon him; for if he should see any other person mount, there were danger that he would throw down the coach with his trunk, and kill him; and therefore when any body is to get up, the *mayre* generally covers his eyes with his ears, which are very large and ill shap'd.

[How they are corrected.]

If at any time the elephant does not obey so readily as he should, the *mayre* beats him cruelly on the middle of his forehead, standing himself all the while upright on his head. One time when I was upon him, with several others, the *mayre* beat him, as has been said, and every stroke he gave him, it looked as if we should have been all thrown down headlong. Generally they give him six or seven strokes on the middle of the forehead; but with such force, that the elephant quakes, and yet bears all patiently. There is only one time when he obeys neither the *mayre*, nor any other body, which is, when on a sudden he is inflamed with lust; for then, being quite besides himself, he bears with no body, but lays hold of the coach with all that are in it, killing, destroying, and beating every thing to pieces. But the *mayre* by certain signs discovers it a little before it comes, and getting down speedily with all the passengers, unloads him, taking down the coach, and leaves him alone in some by-place, till that fury be over; after which, being sensible of his error, and as it were ashamed of himself, he goes with his head low to receive the blows that are to be given him, thinking he has deserved them.

[Now useless in war.]

Formerly the elephants were of great use in war, and those armies were formidable that carried great troops of them into the field; but since the *Portugueses* found out the way of using artificial fireworks to them, they are rather hurtful than otherwise; for not being able to endure those sparks of fire which get into their eyes, they betake themselves to flight, breaking their own armies, killing and confounding all that stands in their way.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Despite what Borri says here, elephants were trained to endure explosions and fireworks and remained important in Cochinchinese armies throughout the seventeenth century and later. Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1998), pp. 41-

[The rhinoceros.]

The tame elephant fights with only two creatures, which are the wild elephant, and the abada, or rhinoceros; the latter it overcomes, by the first is generally conquered. The rhinoceros is a beast of shape between a horse and an ox, but as big as one of the smallest elephants, cover'd all over with scales, as it were so many plates of armour. He has but one horn in the middle of the forehead, which is straight and pyramidal, and his feet and hoofs are like those of an ox. When I was at *Nucomon*,<sup>5</sup> a city in the province of *Pulucambi*, the governor went out to hunt a rhinoceros, that was in a wood near our dwelling place. He had with him above a hundred men, some a foot, and some a horseback, and eight or ten elephants. The rhinoceros came out of the wood, and seeing so many enemies, was so far from giving any tokens of fear, that it furiously encountered them all, who opened and making a lane, let the rhinoceros run through: It came to the rear, where the governor was a-top of his elephant, waiting to kill it; the elephant endeavors to lay hold with his trunk, but could not by reason of the rhinoceros's swiftness and leaping, that striving to wound the elephant with its horn. The governor knowing it could receive no hurt, by reason of the scales, unless they struck it on the side, waited till leaping it laid open the naked place, and casting a dart, dexterously struck it through from side to side, with great applause and satisfaction of all the multitude of spectators; who without any more to do, laid it upon a great pile of wood, and setting fire to it, leap'd and danc'd about, whilst the scales were burning, and flesh roasting, cutting pieces as it roasted, and eating them. Of the entrails, that is the heart, liver, and brain, they made a more dainty dish, and gave it to the governor, who was upon a rising ground, diverting himself with their merriment. I being present, obtained the hoofs of the governor<sup>6</sup>, which are looked upon to have the same quality and virtue, as the claws of the great beast (or the hoof of the elk) and so the horn is good against poison, as is the unicorn's.

43. See "Les Européens qui ont vu le vieux Hue: Cristoforo Borri," *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* 18, 3-4 (July-December 1931): 306, n. 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Nước Mân* (Salt Water) was a port and the residence of the governor, the modern city of Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh province.

<sup>6</sup> i.e., "obtained the hoofs" from the governor.

## CHAPTER V.

## OF THE QUALITIES, CUSTOMS, AND MANNERS OF THE COCHIN-CHINESES; OF THEIR WAY OF LIVING, THEIR HABIT AND CURES.

[Colour and disposition of body of the *Cochin-Chinese*.]

The *Cochin-Chinese* are in colour like the *Chinese*; that is, inclining to an olive-color: I mean those that are nearest the sea; for those up the inland, as far as *Tonchin*, are as white as the *Europeans*. The shape of their faces is exactly like the *Chinese*, with flat noses, little eyes, but of an indifferent stature, not so small as the *Japanese*, nor so tall as the *Chinese*. Yet they are stronger and more active than either of them, and braver than the *Chinese*, but are out-done by the *Japanese* in one thing, which is the contempt of life in dangers and battles: The *Japanese* seeming to make no account of life, nor to apprehend the least fear of death.

[Their civility.]

The *Cochin-Chinese* are naturally the most courteous and affable of all the *Eastern* nations; and tho' on the one side they value themselves much upon their valour, yet on the other they look upon it as a great shame, to suffer themselves to be transported with passion. And whereas all the other *Eastern* nations, looking upon the *Europeans* as a profane people, do naturally abhor them, and therefore fly from us when first we come among them: in *Cochin-China* it falls out just contrary; for they strive who shall be nearest us, ask a thousand questions, invite us to eat with them, and in short use all manner of courtesy with much familiarity and respect. So it happened to me and my companions when we first came there, being as it were, among friends of an old standing. This is a very good disposition to facilitate the preaching of the gospel

[liberality.]

This loving and easy disposition is the cause of much concord among them, they all treating one another as familiarly as if they were brothers or of the same family, tho' they have never known or seen one another before; and it would be look'd upon as a most vile action, if one man eating any thing, tho' never so little, should not share with all about him, giving every one a bit. They are also naturally kind and free-hearted to the poor, to whom it is customary among them never to deny an alms, when asked; and it would be reputed a great fault to deny it, as if it were due to them. Thus it happened, that some strangers escaping from a shipwreck in a port

in *Cochin-China*, and not knowing the language to make known their want, but learning only this word *doi*<sup>1</sup> [Dó], which signifies *I am hungry*: when the natives saw strangers at their doors, crying out *doi*, as if the greatest misfortune in the world had befallen them, every one strove to be before another in giving them to eat; so that in a short time they gathered so much provision, that a ship being afterwards given them by the king to return to their country, they took such an affection to that country, where they found all things for their sustenance at such an easy rate, that not a man of them would go away; so that the captain of the ship was forced to drive them aboard with many blows and cuts, which he effectually did, loading the ship with the rice they had gathered only by going about, crying, *I am hungry*.

But as ready as the *Cochin-Chinenses* are to give, so are they as apt, if not more, to ask any thing they see, so that as soon as ever they cast their eye on any thing that is new to them, and curious, they say, *Schin Mocaii*? that is, *Give me one of these things*: and it is such a rudeness to refuse them, tho' the thing be rare and precious, that whosoever should do it, would be ever after looked upon as a vile person; so that a man must either hide, or be ready to give what he shews. A *Portuguese* merchant disliking this uncommon custom, as not used to it, resolved, since every one asked of him whatsoever he saw, to do the same with them: accordingly he came to a poor fisherman's boat, and laying hold of a pannier full of fish, in the country language said to him, *Schin Mocaii*; the honest man made no answer, but gave him all the pannier as it was, for him to carry home, as he did, admiring the liberality of the *Cochin-Chinenses*; but taking compassion on the poor fisherman, he afterwards paid him the full value of it.

[Their breeding.]

The manner of breeding and civility the *Cochin-Chinenses* use, is more or less the same with that of the *Chinese*s, always punctually observing all niceties; we know these latter observe between superiors and inferiors, equals, and the respect due to ancient persons, ever preferring the eldest, of what degree soever, and giving them preference before the younger. Wherefore some of those gentlemen coming often a visiting to our house, tho' the interpreter told them, that a father we had there somewhat elder than the rest, was not our superior: yet they could never be brought to pay their respect to the young superior, before the old man. In every house, tho' never so poor, the *Cochin-Chinenses* have three sorts of seats: the first and meanest, is a mat upon the bare floor, on which persons of equal quality sit, as those that are of the same family. The next is, a low stool, covered with a very fine mat, which is for persons of better account. The third is a couch about three quarters of a yard high, on which only the lords and governors of places sit, or persons dedicated to the divine service, and on this they always make our fathers sit.

This good nature and civility of the *Cochin-Chinenses*, makes them so courteous to strangers, whom they allow to live according to their own laws, and to wear what clothes they please; and so they praise their customs, and admire their doctrine,

<sup>1</sup> In the original, it is written *doi*. In the modern orthography, it is spelled *doi*. Christoforo Borri, *Relatione*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> In the original, it is written *Schin mocaii*. See *ibid.*, pp. 49-50. In the modern orthography it is *Xin mòi còi*.

frankly preferring them before their own; quite contrary to the *Chinese*s, who despise all but their own customs and doctrine.

[Fashion of clothes.]

As for their habit, we have before observed, that it is the general custom in *Cochin-China* to wear silk; It only remains to speak of the fashion of their clothes. To begin with the women; I think the modestest garb of all *India*; for even in the hottest weather, they suffer no part of the body to be uncovered: they wear five or six petticoats one over another, all of several colours, the first reaches to the ground, which they trail along the ground with such gravity and state, that the tips of their toes are not seen; the second is half a span shorter than the first: the third shorter than that; and so one over another, so that all the several colors appear: and this is the women's habit from the waste [waist] downwards, for on their bodies they wear doublets checkered of several colours; over all they have a veil; but so thin, that tho' it covers them, yet it is transparent, and shews all their gaily with modesty, and makes a beauteous majestic appearance. Their hair is loose, spreading over their shoulders, so long that it reaches to the ground, and the longer the greater beauty it is reckoned. On their head they wear such a broad cap, that it covers all their face, so that they cannot see above four or five paces before them; and these caps are interwoven with silk and gold, according to the quality of the person. The women when met, are not obliged to any other return of civility, but to lift up the brims of their caps, so much, as their face may be seen. The man, instead of breeches, swathe themselves with a whole piece of stuff, putting on over them five or six long and large gowns all of fine silk, and of several colors, with wide sleeves, like those of the monks of the order of St. Benedict<sup>3</sup>; and these gowns, from the waste downwards, are all flashed curiously so that as a man moves he makes a shew of all those several colours together, and if any wind blows to lift them up, they look like peacocks with their fine feathers spread abroad.

[Hair and nails never cut.]

They let their hair grow as the women do, down to their heels, and wear the same sort of hats, or broad caps. Those who have any beard, and they are but few, never cut it; being in this like the *Chinese*s, as they are in suffering the nails of their hands to grow, which the people of note never pare; this being a mark of distinction between them and the commonalty, who always keep them short, for the convenience of their trades; whereas the gentry have them so long, that they cannot grasp any small thing in their hands. Nor can they approve of our fashion of cutting our hair and nails<sup>4</sup> being of opinion, that they were given by nature, as an ornament

<sup>3</sup> The order, also known as "black monks," was founded in the sixth century by St. Benedict (480?-547?).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Koffler, who spent several years in Cochinchina in the mid-eighteenth century, in his work *Historia Cochinchinae descriptio*, published in 1803, observed that "short hair was the sign of a commoner"; Jean Koffler, "Description historique de la Cochinchine," *Revue Indochinoise* XVI,12 (December 1911): 582. Martini, a missionary in Tonkin in the mid-seventeenth century, wrote: "Men as well as women wear their hair rolled up because they lived under the Chinese domination..." but being liberated from their captivity to mark their liberty, as they say,



to man: so that some discourse arising once concerning hair, they started an objection, which was not so easy to answer at sight, saying: *If the Saviour of the world, whom in your actions you profess your selves to imitate, wore his hair long, after the manner of the Nazaries, as you your selves do affirm, and shew by your pictures, why do not you do so too?* Adding, *That our Saviour's wearing long hair, demonstrated it to be the better fashion.* But at last they were satisfy'd with the answer we made, that this imitation did not consist in the outward dress.<sup>5</sup>

[The scholars.]

The scholars and doctors are somewhat more gravely clad, without so many colours and flashes, and therefore cover all their gowns with one of black damask. They also wear a thing like a stole about their necks and a blew [blue] silk mantle on their arms, covering their heads with caps made after the manner of mitres.

Both men and women carry fans in their hands, rather for ornament than use, and they are not unlike to those the women in *Europe* use. For mourning, as we *Europeans* use black, they wear white. They never uncover their heads in saluting, that being looked upon as an uncivil action. Wherein they agree with the *Chinenses*, among whom that custom is reputed so unmannerly, that to comply with them in this particular, the fathers of the society were forced to obtain leave of pope *Paul* the fifth,<sup>6</sup> to celebrate the holy sacrifice of the mass covered. In short, the *Cochin-Chinenses* wear neither shoes nor stockings, only saving their feet with leather soles fastened across the toes with silk, like sandals; nor do they think it indecent to go quite barefoot; and though going shod or unshod, they are apt to dirty their feet, they value it not there being in every house at the door of the chief room, a large pan of clean water, in which they wash their feet, leaving those soles or sandals they use there, to take them again when they go away, because they cannot then dirt their feet, all the floors being covered with mats.

The *Cochin-Chinenses* not being so fond of their own customs, as to despise those of strangers, as the *Chinenses* do, our fathers in those parts have no occasion to change their habit, wherein they differ but little from the generality of all *India*. They wear a thin cotton cassock, which they call *Ethingon*, and is generally blue, without any cloak, or other upper-garment. They have no shoes,<sup>7</sup> neither after the *European*, nor country [local] fashion; the first they cannot get, because there is no body knows how to make them; and the latter they cannot endure, because of the pain it is to any body that is not used to it, to have his toes spread at a distance from one another, by

against the Chinese sentiments, they leave their hair hang loose neglectfully." Gio. Filippo de Martini, *Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tunquin et de Lao*, pp. 70-1.

<sup>5</sup> A similar problem existed in China with the advent of Buddhism, when Buddhism was considered an alien religion. One of the objections that the Chinese had against the Buddhists was that they shaved their heads, thus altering their appearance given to them by God and their parents. Martini describes the situation between the Buddhist monks and lay people in Tonkin as follows: "Bonzes are shaved-head by some vanity and presumption. Seculars, they say, whose actions are mortal and of no consideration, who do not have any merits, should, in fact, have their hair long so that the Idol could pull them easily to Heaven; but not them [bonzes], whose proper merits will serve them as wings to rise [there]." Martini, *Relation nouvelle*, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> 1550-1621, elected to be Pope in 1605.

<sup>7</sup> The original reads *non usano però scarpe* (p. 57): "but they do not use shoes."

reasons of the buttons that fasten them on, and therefore they choose as the less evil, to go quite barefoot, though it exposes them to continual pains in the bowels, especially at first, by reason of the dampness of the country, and their not being used to it. True it is, that in time nature complies, and the skin grows so hard, that it is no pain to walk upon stones or briars. When I returned to *Macao*, I could not endure shoes, thinking them a weight and encumbrance to my feet.

[Their diet.]

The chief sustenance of the *Cochin-Chinenses* is rice; and it is wonderful, that the country abounds in flesh, fowl, fish, and fruit, of so many several sorts, yet when they eat, they first fill their belly with rice, and then taste of other things, as it were for fashion-sake. They make more account of rice than we do of bread, and that it may not clog them, they eat it alone without any seasoning of salt, sugar, oil, or butter, but boiled in so much water as will keep it from burning to, so that the grain remains whole, only soften'd and moisten'd. For this very reason that the rice is not seasoned, it is the easier of digestion, and therefore they that live upon rice, as they do in the east, commonly eat it at least four times a day, and a great quantity of it to support nature. The *Cochin-Chinenses* eat sitting cross-legg'd on the ground, with a round table before them breast-high, with mouldings, or adorned with silver or gold, according to the people's quality or wealth. It is not very large; because the custom is for every man to have one to himself, so that at a feast, as many guests as there are, so many tables are provided, and the same is done when they dine privately; only, sometimes man and wife, or father and son, will make a shift with the same table. They neither use knives nor forks; of the first they have no need, because every thing is brought up from the kitchen cut into small bits; the place of the last is supplied by two little sticks, wherewith they neatly and very readily take up any thing; nor have they any need of napkins, for they never foul their hands, nor touch any thing with them.

[Their treats.]

There are frequent invitations among neighbours, and at these entertainments they provide other sorts of dishes than what we have hitherto spoke of; for they make no account of rice, supposing every man has enough of that at home; and tho' he that treats be never so poor, he does not come off with credit, unless every guest's table be served with at least an hundred dishes; and it being the custom to invite all their friends, kindred, and neighbours, there is no feast where there is less than thirty, forty, fifty, sometimes a hundred, and even two hundred guests: I was once myself at a solemn entertainment, at which no less than two thousand were feasted, and therefore these banquets must be made in the country, that there may be room for so many tables. Nor must any body admire that the tables being small, they be furnished with a hundred dishes at least; for upon these occasions they very curiously make frames of sugar canes on the table, on which they dispose of the said dishes; and there must be in them all the varieties of meat the country produces, as well flesh as fish, and butcher's meat, as fowl, wild and tame creatures, with all sorts of fruit the season affords; for if but one were wanting, it would be a great fault in the entertainer, and they would not count it a feast. The men of quality that are invited eat first, being waited on by their chief servants. When the masters have

tasted of all they like best, these same principal servants take their places, and eat, being waited on by the inferior sort; then these succeed in their places; and because all of them are not able to consume such plenty, and according to custom all the dishes must be emptied; when these are satisfied, then the very meanest servants of every great man come in, and do not only eat their belly full, but put up all the fragments in bags they carry for that purpose, and carry them home, where they merrily divide it among the boys, and other mean fry, and so the feast ends.

[Their drink.]

*Cochín-China* produces no grapes, and therefore instead of wine they drink a liquor distilled from rice, which tastes like brandy, and resembles it in colour and harshness, spirit and briskness, and they have such plenty of it, that all people in general drink as much as they will of it, and are as drunk as people are among us with wine. Graver persons mix that liquor with some other water distilled from *calamba*, which gives it a delicious smell, and is a delicate composition.

Between meals they drink hot water, wherein they boil the root of an herb they call *chia*,<sup>8</sup> from which the liquor takes name. It is cordial, and helps to dispel humours from the stomach, and advance digestion. The *Japanese* and *Chinese* use such a sort of drink, only that in *China*, instead of the root, they boil the leaves of the herb; and in *Japan*, a powder made of the same leaves; but the effect is the same, and they call it *chia*.

Amidst this great plenty of meat, and abundance of provisions, it is incredible how much hunger and thirst we *Europeans* endure; not so much for want of food, as because we are not used to that diet, nature finding a very great miss of bread and wine; and I believe the *Cochín-Chinese* would be in the same condition, should they come into *Europe*, where they would be deprived of their usual sustenance of rice, tho' they had plenty of other delicate provisions. To this purpose I will not omit to relate what happened to us with a governor of *Cochín-China*, he being a friend of ours, was invited by us to eat at our house; and the more to shew our affection, we endeavoured to have several dishes dressed for him after the *European* manner. He sat down to table, and when we expected he should acknowledge our kindness, commend the cookery, and thank us for the rarity, because we had been at much trouble about it; when he had tasted them all, he could not eat of any one, though out of civility he strove against his stomach, and we were forced to dress more meat after the country fashion, the best we could, whereof he afterwards eat very favourably, to his own and our satisfaction. Yet providence does not neglect a thousand ways to support those that undergo these hardships for the preaching of the gospel, finding means, even in this world, to requite what they suffer for the sake of God, as happens in this particular of food, as was before-said of going bare-foot; for by degrees nature grows familiar with it, and comes to be so habituated to the custom of

the country, that it looks strange when to return to its first ways. This happened to me, who, when I returned from thence, coveted nothing but the rice of *Cochín-China*, which I thought satisfied me more than any other thing.

[Physicians.]

As for physicians, and their way of practice, there are abundance of doctors, not only *Portuguese*, but natives; and it often is experimentally known, that the country physicians easily cure several diseases, which the *European* physicians know not what to do with, so it sometimes happens, that after our physicians have given over a patient, they call one of the country, and he cures him.

[Way of practice.]

The physicians of the country use this sort of practice; being come to the patient's bedside, they stay a little to settle themselves after the motion of coming; then they feel the pulse for a long while together, very attentively, and with much consideration; after which they usually say, You have such a distemper, and if incurable, they honestly say, I have no cure for this disease; which is a sign the patient will die. If they find the disease curable, they say, I have a medicine that will cure him; and I will do it in so many days. Then they agree what they are to have if they cure the sick man, bargaining the best they can, and sometimes they draw up writings to bind the contract. After this the physician himself prepares the medicine, without the help of an apothecary; for which reason there are none in the country; and this they do, that they may not discover the secret of the art they work, and because they will not trust another to put together the ingredients they prescribe. If the patient recovers within the time appointed, as generally happens, he pays the price agreed on; if he miscarries, the physician loses his labor and medicines.

[Medicines.]

The medicines they give are not like ours, which cause a loathing, and are laxative; but theirs are palatable as their broths, and nourishing without any other sustenance, which makes them give the patient several doses in a day, as we give broth at so many hours interval; and these do not alter the course of nature, but only help the usual operations of nature, dispersing the peccant humours, without wracking the patient.

[A notable story.]

I remember a passage worth the relating in this place: A *Portuguese* falling sick, sent for the *European* physicians; who having used their endeavors, gave him over. When they were gone, a physician of the country was called; who undertook to cure him in so many days, strictly injoining him, whilst he was under his hands, to have a care of having to do with women, upon pain of certain death, from which the virtue of his medicine could not deliver him. They agreed upon the price, and the physician undertook to cure him in thirty days. The patient took the medicines prescribed him, and in a few days found himself so well recovered, that he was not afraid to transgress the physician's injunction; who coming to visit him, by the alteration of

<sup>8</sup> *T'ia*, tea. Tea did not become known in Europe until rather late, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was the Dutch who introduced it to Europe. Tea was an exotic product for the first Europeans. Alexandre de Rhodes commented on it: "In my opinion one of the things that contributes most to the health of these people who so often reach a ripe old age is tea, used very widely throughout the Orient, and which is beginning to be known in France through the medium of the Dutch, who bring it from China and sell it in Paris for thirty francs a pound, which they bought in that country for eight to ten cents." Alexandre de Rhodes, *Rhodes of Vietnam*, trans. Solange Hertz (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1966), p. 31.

his pulse discovered the sick man's incontinency, and bid him prepare to die, because there was no cure for him; but that he should pay him his money, since it was none of his fault that he must die. The case was try'd; the sick man was adjudged to pay; and so he died.

[Bleeding.]

Bleeding is also used, but not so much as in *Europe*, nor is it done with a steel lancet; but they have abundance of goose-quills, in which they fix some bits of fine porcelain, made sharp, and shaped like the teeth of a saw, some bigger, some less, of several sizes. When they are to let blood, they apply one of these quills to the vein, proportionable to the bigness of it, and giving it a flip with the finger, open the vein, only so much of the porcelain entering as is requisite; and what is most wonderful, when they have drawn the blood, they use no fillet or binding to stop it; but wetting their thumb with spittle they press the orifice, so that the flesh returning to the place whence it was parted, the blood is stop'd, and runs out no more; which I suppose to proceed from the manner of opening the vein, as it were sawing it with that porcelain full of teeth, and therefore it closes again the easier.

[Surgeons.]

There are also surgeons, who have some wonderful secrets, whereof I will give but two instances, one practiced upon my self, the other upon one of our brothers, my companion: I happened to fall from a very high place, with my breast against the corner of a stone, whereupon I presently began to spit blood, and had a wound in my breast outwardly.

[Great cures.]

We applied some medicines after our *European* manner, but to no purpose. A surgeon of the country came and took a quantity of a certain herb like that we call mercury, and making it into a plaister, laid it on my breast, then he caused some of that herb to be boiled for me to drink, and made me eat the same herb raw; and thus in a few days perfectly cured me. I, to make another experiment, caused the leg of a hen to be broke in several places, and making a plaister as he had done for the same herb, bound it upon the broken leg, and in a few days it was whole and sound.

A scorpion bit a brother of ours, my companion, in the neck; and in that kingdom the bite of a scorpion is mortal. All his throat swelled immediately, and we were about giving him extreme unction. A surgeon was sent for, who immediately set a pot of rice a boiling in nothing but fair water, then clapping the pot to the brother's feet, covered him and it close with cloths, that the steam might not go out, and as soon as the said steam and hot smoke of the rice came up to the place where the bite was, the brother felt the pain assuage, the swelling in his throat fell, and he remained as sound as if nothing had ailed him.

Many other instances might be added, but I shall only say, that the medicines in those parts have a greater virtue than when they come to us; and particularly I can affirm, that I brought with me a small cask of *rhubarb*, which was extraordinary good there, and when I came into *Europe*, having spent two years by the way, I found it so changed, that I scarce knew it myself, so that those medicines lose much of their virtue in bringing from those countries to our parts.



## CHAPTER VI.

OF THE CIVIL AND POLITICAL  
GOVERNMENT OF THE  
COCHIN-CHINESES.

I will give a brief account of as much as may suffice for the reader's information; for it would be too tedious, and from the purpose of this my short relation, to discourse of every thing in particular. The government of *Cochin-China*, in general, is a medium betwixt those of *China* and *Japan*: for whereas the *Japaneses* make less account of learning than military knowledge: and on the contrary, the *Chinese* attribute all to learning, taking little notice of warlike affairs.<sup>1</sup> The *Cochin-Chinese* following the example of neither, equally encourage learning, and skill in war, according as occasion offers; sometimes preferring the soldier, and sometimes the scholar, and so repulsing them as appears most convenient.

## [Learning.]

In *Cochin-China* there are several<sup>2</sup> universities, in which there are professors, scholars, and degrees conferred by way of examination, in the same manner as is practiced in *China*; the same sciences being taught, and the same books and authors read,<sup>3</sup> that is, *Zinfi*, or *Confucius*, as the *Portugueses* call them;<sup>4</sup> which are authors of such profound learning, and in such esteem and reputation amongst them, as *Aristotle*<sup>5</sup> is among us, being much ancients than he. These books of theirs are full of erudition, of stories, of grave sentences, or proverbs, and such like things, for the directing a civil life, as are *Seneca*,<sup>6</sup> *Cato*,<sup>7</sup> and *Cicero*,<sup>8</sup> among us; and they spend

<sup>1</sup> This is a very interesting observation as it reflects Borri's knowledge of the governments in both China and Japan.

<sup>2</sup> In the original Italian, *molto*, "many." Borri, *Relatione*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> While the government in the North was mostly built on the civil service, the Nguyễn government relied heavily on the military, especially during the first period of its existence, since they were at war with the Trinh lords. The civil service exams were held there on a less frequent and less regular basis than in the North, but they were still based on the same Confucian Classics and commentaries to them, as in the North.

<sup>4</sup> This sentence is obscure as it is not clear whether *Zinfi* is the same person as Confucius or these are two different people. On the one hand, "or" implies that they are the same person; on the other hand, Borri uses the plural for "authors" and uses the pronoun "them." The name *Zinfi* is a mystery.

<sup>5</sup> 384-322 BCE. Greek philosopher and mathematician.

<sup>6</sup> Lucius Annaeus Seneca (3-4 BCE-65 CE). A Spanish-born Roman philosopher, a tutor and later advisor to Emperor Nero (r. 54-68), one of the most famous Stoic philosophers.

many years in learning the true sense of the phrases, words, characters, and hieroglyphics, they are writ in; but that they most value is moral philosophy, or ethics, economy, and policy. It is comical to see and hear them, when they are studying, read and repeat their lessons in such a tone as if they were singing, which they do to use themselves to it, and give every word its proper accents, which are many, every one expressing a several thing: and therefore one would think, that to converse with them, a man must understand the grounds of music.

The language they generally speak, is different from that they read and teach at the schools, and which their books are writ in: as among us the vulgar language differs from the *Latin* used in the schools. Wherein they differ from the *Chinese*, who, if they are learned, or noble, always use the same language, which they call of *mandarins*; that is, of doctors, judges, and governors, and the characters they use in writing and printing their books, are above eight thousand, all differing from one another. And for this reason the fathers of the society spend eight, and even ten years, in studying the *Chinese* books, before they can be masters, and go abroad to converse with them. But the *Cochin-Chinese* have reduced the characters to three thousand, which they generally make use of: and these are enough to express themselves in their harangues, letters, petitions, memorials, and such things which do not belong to printed books;<sup>9</sup> for those of necessity must be in *Chinese* characters. The *Japaneses* have been more ingenious, who, tho' in all that belongs to books, whether written or printed, they agree with the *Chinese*, yet for common uses have found out forty-eight letters, wherewith they express whatsoever they please, as well as we do with our alphabet: and yet the *Chinese* characters are in such esteem even among the *Japaneses*, that these forty-eight letters, notwithstanding the use they are of above the others, are contemned in comparison of them; insomuch, that in scorn they call them women's letters.<sup>10</sup>

The ingenious invention of printing was found out in *China*,<sup>11</sup> and *Cochin-China*, long before it was in *Europe*: but not in such perfection: for they do not compose joining letters and characters, but with a graver, penknife, or such instrument, cut and carve the characters upon a stone as they will have them in their books: on this board so carved they lay their paper, and print it off, as we in *Europe* do copper-plates, or the like.

Besides these books of morals, they have others, which contain things they account sacred: as for instance, the creation and beginning of the world: of the rational souls of demons: of idols, and of their several sects. These books are called

<sup>7</sup> Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 BCE). A Roman orator, statesman, and writer, called Cato for his skillfulness (from Latin *catus*—sharp intellect). He advocated a return to conservative values of Roman morality.

<sup>8</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE). A Roman orator and statesman.

<sup>9</sup> Borri is here referring to the demotic Vietnamese writing called *nôm*.

<sup>10</sup> The reference is to the *hiragana* system of writing composed of forty-eight characters. "*Hira* means 'commonly used,' 'easy,' 'rounded.'" Campbell et al., eds., *The Japan Encyclopedia* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993), p. 731. *Hiragana* was developed from simplified Chinese characters. In its early [ninth century] forms, *hiragana* was used by women [who were not permitted to learn the Chinese script], while the unsimplified *kanji* were used by men; for this reason, the earliest *hiragana* was also called *onnade*, 'women's hand.' By the end of the ninth century, *onnade* ceased to be a system limited to women ... " Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ninth century.

*Sayc Kim*, to distinguish them from the profane, which they call *Sayc Chiu*.<sup>12</sup> Of the doctrine of their sacred books, we shall treat in the second part of this account, where the subject will be more suitable.

[The language.]

Though the language of the *Cochin-Chinese* be in one respect like that of the *Chinese*, both of them using all monosyllables, delivered in several tones and accents; yet they utterly differ in the word itself, the *Cochin-Chinese* being more full of vowels, and consequently softer and sweeter, more copious in tones and accents, and therefore more harmonious. The language of *Cochin-China* is, in my opinion, the easiest of any, for those that have a musical ear, to take the tones and accents; for it has no variety by way of conjugation of verbs, or declination of nouns, but one and the same word, with the addition of an adverb, or pronoun, signifies the present, the preterit, and future tenses, the singular number, and the plural; and in fine, serves for all moods, tenses, and persons, and the diversity of numbers and cases. For instance, this word, *To have*, which in the [*Cochin*] *Chinese* language<sup>13</sup> is *Co* [*Cô*], by only adding a pronoun, serves all occasions, saying, *I have*, *Thou have*, *He have*, the name of the person making that diversity, which we express by altering the termination, thus, *I have*, *Thou have*, *He have*. In the same manner they make the several tenses, saying, for the present, *I now have*; for the preterit, *I heretofore have*; and for the future, *I hereafter have*. And so without ever altering the word *Co*, by which it appears how easily this language may be learned: as it happened to me, who in six months understood so much, that I could discourse, and even hear their confessions, tho' not so perfectly, for it requires at least four years to be a master [This variety of moods and tenses, appears better by the Latin, or other languages, than in English, where we use much the same method, as he represents in *Cochin-China*, our variations the same, being but few, as to instance in the same word, I have, You have, We have, They have, I shall have, May we have: and so in this, and many others.]<sup>14</sup>

[Rewards for military men.]

But to return to our relation: I was saying, that the *Cochin-Chinese* reward not only the learned with dignities, employments, and revenues: but that they make great account of good soldiers, in which particular they act differently from us; for instead of assigning brave commanders, some land, earldom, or marquissate, as a reward of their valour, they allot him such a number of people, and vassals, belonging to the king himself, who, whatsoever part of the kingdom they live in, are obliged to own him as their lord, to whom they have been assigned by the king,

<sup>12</sup> *Sayc Kim* is *Sách Kinh* in modern spelling, denoting "sutras" or classic Confucian books. As for *Sayc Chiu*, its original is more uncertain. It is possible that *Sayc Chiu* stands for *Sách Chiu*, meaning "book in letters or in characters" to distinguish between the sacredness of the *kinh* and the mundaneness of the *chiu*, while also highlighting the difference between classical Chinese in the first case (as *kinh* is a Chinese word) and the demotic Vietnamese (*chín*) in the second case, as *chiu* is vernacular. It should be noted that *chiu* can signify any script, including Chinese, as for example in the compound *chiu Hân*, "classical Chinese."

<sup>13</sup> In the original it is "in *Cochin-Chinese* language." See Christoforo Borri, *Relazione*, p. 75. The English translation dropped "*Cochin*."

<sup>14</sup> This bracketed comment is from the translator.

being bound upon all occasions to serve him with their weapons, and to pay him all those duties they before paid to the king himself, and therefore, as we say, such a one is lord, earl, or marquess of such a place; they say, such a one is a man of fifty, such a one of a thousand men, to such a one the king has added three thousand, to such a one two thousand; their dignity, wealth, and grandeur increasing by the addition of many vassals. We shall speak of the wars of this kingdom in the next chapter.

[Trials at law.]

It remains that we say somewhat worth being known of the civil government. In the first they govern rather after a military manner, than by judges, counsellors, and lawyers, and their formalities; the vice-roys and governors of provinces performing that function: for every day they give publick audience for four hours daily, in a large court within their own palace, two hours in the morning, and two after dinner. Hither all suits and complaints are brought, and the vice-roy, or governor, sitting on a tribunal raised like a balcony, hears every man in his turn; and these governors being generally men of sound judgment, capacity, and experience, they easily discover the truth of the matter by the questions they put, and much more by the common consent of the stander-by, which is gathered by the applause they give the plaintiff, or defendant, and accordingly they immediately, without delay, give judgment with a loud voice, which is immediately executed without any demur, or appeal, whether the sentence be death, banishment, whipping, or fine, every crime being punished as the law appoints.

[False witnesses, how punished.]

The crimes generally try'd and severely punished are many, but they are particularly rigid against false witnesses, thieves, and adulterers. The first of these being convicted of having given false evidence, are themselves indispensably condemned, as if they themselves had committed the crime they accuse others of. And if the crime they alleged deserved death, they are sentenced to die: and experience teaches, that this way of trial is very proper to find out the truth.

[Thieves.]

Thieves, if the theft be considerable, are beheaded; if small, as for example, a hen, for the first offense they have a finger cut off, for the second another finger, for the third an ear, and for the fourth the head.

[Adulterers.]

Adulterers, both men and women, indifferently are cast to the elephants to be killed, which is done thus: They lead the criminal out into the field, where in the presence of an infinite number of people flocking together, he is set in the middle, with his hands and feet bound, near an elephant, to whom the condemned person's sentence is read, that he may execute every part of it orderly; first, that he lay hold of, grasp, and hold him fast with his trunk, and so hold him in the air, shewing him to all the company; then, that he toss him up, and catch him upon the points of his teeth, that his own weight may strike them through him; that then, he dash him

against the ground; and lastly, that he bruise and crush him to pieces with his feet. All which is exactly performed by the elephant, to the great terror and amazement of the spectators, who are taught by this punishment, at another man's cost, what fidelity is due between married persons.

[Matrimony.]

Since we are upon this point of matrimony, it will not be from the purpose to deliver some farther particulars concerning it, before we conclude this chapter. The *Cochin-Chinenses*, though heathens, never use to contract matrimony within those degrees forbid by the laws of God and nature, nor within the first degree of the collateral line of brothers and sisters. In other degrees, matrimony is lawful to every man with only one woman; though rich men use to have many concubines, under pretense of grandeur and generosity, looking upon it as covetousness, not to have as many as every man's income will conveniently maintain; and these are called second, third, fourth, and fifth wives, and so on, according to every one's rank, all which wait upon the first, which is accounted, and really is the true wife, whose business it is to choose the others for her husband. But these marriages of theirs are not indissoluble, the laws of *Cochin-China* allowing of divorces, but not at the will of either party, it being first requisite, that the person suing for it, convict the other of many offenses; which being made out, it is lawful to dissolve the first marriage, and marry again. The husbands bring the portion, and leave their own houses to go to the wife's; upon whose fortunes they live, the women managing all the household affairs, and governing the family, whilst the husband lives idle at home, hardly knowing what there is in the house, satisfied that they have meat and clothes.

## CHAPTER VII.

# OF THE POWER OF THE KING OF COCHIN-CHINA, AND OF THE WARS HE HAS IN HIS KINGDOM.

[Their skill in cannon and small arms.]

I took notice at the beginning of this account, that *Cochin-China* was a province of the great kingdom of *Tonchin*, usurp'd by the grandfather of the king now reigning; who being made governor of it, rebelled against the said king of *Tonchin*; to which he was not a little encouraged, by having in a short time got together a great many pieces of cannon, of the wrecks of several *Portuguese* and *Dutch* ships, cast away upon those rocks, which being taken up by the country people, there are above sixty of the biggest, at this time, to be seen in the king's palace. The *Cochin-Chinenses* are now become so expert in managing artillery, that they perform it better than the *Europeans*, practicing continually to shoot at a mark, with such success, that being proud of their skill, as soon as any *European* ship arrives in their ports, the king's gunners challenge ours, who being sensible that they cannot stand in competition with them, as near as they can, avoid this trial of skill, being convinced by experience, that they will hit any thing as exactly with a cannon, as another shall do with a firelock; which they are also very expert at, often drawing out into the field to exercise.

[Gallies, scymitars, and horses.]

Another great encouragement to rebellion, was, his having above a hundred gallies, which rendering him formidable at sea, and the artillery by land, he easily compass'd his designs against the king of *Tonchin*. Besides, by reason of the constant trade in *Japan*, there were in *Cochin-China* abundance of *Catana's*,<sup>1</sup> which are scymitars made in *Japan*, and excellently tempered. And all the country abounding in horses, which tho' small, are handsome and mettlesome, on which they fight, casting darts, and daily exercise themselves.

[King's power.]

The power of this king is so great, that whensoever he pleases, he can bring 80,000 fighting men into the field, and yet is always in fear of the king of *Tonchin*, whose power is four times as great; to whom, for quietness sake, he, by agreement, pays a tribute, of all such things as his kingdom affords, and are useful for that of *Tonchin*, particularly of gold, silver, and rice; furnishing, besides all this, plank and

<sup>1</sup> *Catana* is a Japanese word for scimitar, a curved sword.

timber for building of gallees. And for the same reason he was about entering into a league with the fugitive son [Mac Kinh Cung] of the late king [Mac Mậu Hạp],<sup>2</sup> who lorded it in the utmost province of *Tonchin*, which borders upon *China* [Cao Bằng],<sup>3</sup> that in case he succeeded, and became master of *Tonchin*, *Cochin-China* might remain free from all tribute and acknowledgment.<sup>4</sup>

For the better understanding hereof, it is to be observed, that when I was in *Cochin-China*, that kingdom [Tonkin] was in the possession not of the precedent king [Mac Mậu Hạp], but<sup>5</sup> the tutor or governor [Trinh Tùng]<sup>6</sup> of that son [Mac Kinh Cung], who made his escape from the said governor to save his life. The said prince [Mac Kinh Cung] lived like a fugitive, in the farthest province adjoining to *China* [Cao Bằng], where being known to be what he was, that is, the late king's son, he was received by that people as their sovereign lord, and by his good government he had so strengthened himself, that his tutor [Trinh Tùng], already declared king of *Tonchin*,<sup>7</sup> was much afraid, seeing him [Mac Kinh Cung] grow so great, lest he should agree with the king of *Cochin-China*, who is on the opposite side, to catch him [Trinh Tùng] between them, and expel him his unjust possession.<sup>8</sup> He therefore every year form'd a considerable army to destroy the aforesaid prince [Mac Kinh Cung], but always to no purpose, because the army being of necessity to march five or six days, through a country where there is no other water to drink, but that of some

<sup>2</sup> Ruled from 1562 to 1592, the last king of the Mac dynasty to rule from Hanoi.

<sup>3</sup> In 1592 the Mac were driven from the capital city into the northern provinces of Tonkin and concentrated in the northernmost provinces of Cao Bằng and Lạng Sơn. King Mac Mậu Hạp was captured. His son Mac Kinh Cung (r. 1593-1625) was proclaimed king to succeed him. With the help of the Ming dynasty in China, Cao Bằng was secured for the Mac. They remained there until 1667. Trần Trọng Kim, *Việt Nam Sử Lược* (Short History of Vietnam) (Nha Xuất Bản Hà Nội, 1999), pp. 302-6.

<sup>4</sup> Borri refers to contacts between the Nguyễn and the Mac families. While we do not have historical evidence corroborating this statement, it is only logical to assume that after 1600, when the Nguyễn began to be estranged from the Trinh, who were based in Hanoi, they would approach the Mac in search of an ally against the Trinh.

<sup>5</sup> This is an imprecise translation of the original, which reads "... *stava in possesso de Regno del Tonchin, non il figlio del Re passato, ma...*" ("... already in possession of the Kingdom of Tonkin, not the son of the preceding king, but ..."). Borri, *Relazione*, p. 83. The English translation gives two variations for the Italian *Re passato*: in the previous paragraph it was translated as "late king" and here it is "precedent king." But Borri definitely implies one and the same king, Mac Mậu Hạp, and uses the same words in reference to him.

<sup>6</sup> In the original, Borri uses the Italian word *tuto*, which means "tutor." See Borri, *Relazione*, p. 83. Borri mistakenly refers here to the warlord Trinh Tùng (r. 1570-1623)—who was a leading figure in defeating the Mac in 1592—as the tutor of the "son who made his escape," conflating Mac Kinh Cung with King Lê Thế Tông (r. 1573-1599). Lê Thế Tông ascended the throne at the age of seven, and Trinh Tùng was the one who really governed the country as if he were the young king's "tutor." The Trinh family used the Lê kings as figureheads until the end of the dynasty in 1788.

<sup>7</sup> Borri conflates the Mac with the Lê and thinks that the Trinh occupy the throne in Hanoi.

<sup>8</sup> As it has been said above, the Trinh lords were the real rulers, or in Borri's terms "kings," of Tonkin. The Nguyễn lords accused the Trinh of usurping the Lê king's royal authority. The Mac had been expelled into the northern mountains from their possession of the capital in the 1590s by an alliance of the Trinh and Nguyễn; however, the Nguyễn subsequently established themselves on the southern coast in defiance of the Trinh. Continuing warfare between the Trinh and Mac, combined with the increasingly hostile relations between the Trinh and Nguyễn, which broke into open warfare shortly after Borri departed Vietnam, served to make natural allies of the Nguyễn and the Mac against the Trinh.

others coming from the enemies country, the army always found it poisoned by the prince's party, with a sort of herb, the effect whereof was such, that it destroyed both men and horses, which obliged him always to retire after much trouble and expence cast away.<sup>9</sup>

[Wars in Cochín-China.]

The military discipline, and art of war, in *Cochin-China*, is almost the same as in *Europe*, the same form being observed in drawing up, fighting, and retiring. This king has generally war in three parts of his kingdom. First, he is always upon his defense against the king of *Tonchin*, who, as has been said, continually threatens and assaults his frontiers, and therefore the king of *Cochin-China* has his residence in *Sinua*, the extreme part of his dominions, the better to oppose him, and march his forces towards the confines of *Tonchin*, which is a powerful province, and generally under experienced and martial governors.<sup>10</sup>

The next is a sort of civil war, raised by two of his own brothers, who aiming to be equal in command and power, not satisfied with what has been allotted them, have rebelled against him, and craving succours from *Tonchin*, gave him perpetual trouble. Whilst I lived in those parts, they having got some pieces of cannon, which they carried upon elephants, fortified themselves so well upon the frontiers, that the king's army marching against them, was in the first engagement routed, with the loss of 3,000 men; but coming to a second battle, the king's brothers lost all they had gained before, being both made prisoners; and they had both immediately lost their lives, had not his majesty's natural clemency and brotherly affection prevailed, and taken place of his anger, so far as to spare their lives, yet so as to keep them prisoners.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that this passage, starting from the previous paragraph with the words "And for the same reason he was about entering into a league with the fugitive son of the late king," has been completely omitted from the Vietnamese translation of Borri's work; see Cristoforo Borri, *Xứ Đảng Trong Nam 1621* (Cochinchina. Year 1621), trans. Hồng Nhuệ, Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên, Nguyễn Nghi (Hochiminh: Nhà Xuất Bản Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 1998), p. 84. We can hardly attribute it to a random omission, but it rather shows that this digression into early-seventeenth-century Vietnamese history depicting possible connections between the Nguyễn and the Mac rulers and the reference to the Mac being "received by that people as their sovereign lord, and by his good government" is still a highly censored issue in Vietnamese historiography.

<sup>10</sup> See the next footnote. Shortly after Borri's departure from Cochinchina, the Trinh indeed launched the war against the Nguyễn in 1627, after Nguyễn Phúc Nguyên (or Chử Sãi) refused to pay tribute for three years (Trần Trọng Kim, *Việt Nam Sử Lược*, pp. 318-9). The war lasted for fifty years.

<sup>11</sup> Two of Nguyễn Phúc Nguyên's brothers, Phúc Hạp and Phúc Trách, established relations with the Trinh, who were to attack from the north, and rebelled against Nguyễn Phúc Nguyên in 1620. The brothers were defeated and captured, while the northerners, seeing this event and that the Nguyễn astutely agreed to pay tribute, decided not to attack at that time. Phúc Hạp's and Phúc Trách's fate afterwards, however, is not completely clear. *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* (Complete History of Great Viet) simply states that they were apprehended and murdered (*bị bắt giết*); see *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1993), bản kỷ, 21:2a (3:324), under the year 1620. Southern annals, however, report the brothers being put in prison, where they soon died of some illness. But they are not in complete agreement. Some, like *Việt Nam Khai Quốc Chí Truyền* (Story of the Foundation of the Vietnamese State), say Nguyễn Phúc Nguyên was furious and wanted to execute his disloyal brothers, but the majority of the mandarins interceded, and the brothers were imprisoned instead; other sources

The third place where he has continual war, is on the west side, and utmost bound of his kingdom called *Reman*, against the king of *Chiampy*, whose efforts being weaker, are sufficiently repulsed by the troops of that same province, and the governor.

He is also in continual motion, and making warlike preparations to assist the king of *Cambodia*, who has married his bastard daughter, sending him succours of gallees, and men, against the king of *Siam*; and therefore the arms of *Cochin-China*, and their valour, is famous and renowned, as well by sea as by land.<sup>12</sup>

[The gallees.]

At sea they fight in gallees, as has been said, each of which carries cannon, and is manned with musketeers: Nor will it seem strange, that the king of *Cochin-China* has an hundred, or more gallees in a readiness, when the method of furnishing them is known. It is therefore to be observed, that the *Cochin-Chinenses* do not use to have a crew of criminals, or other slaves, to row in their gallees; but when they are to go out to fight, or for any other purpose, the way to man them immediately is this: A great number of officers, and commissaries, go out privately and scouring on a sudden all together throughout the whole kingdom, with the king's authority, press all they find fit for the oar, conducting them all together to the gallees, unless they be exempted by birth, or any other privilege. Nor is this method so troublesome as it appears at first sight; for in the first place they are well used and paid aboard the gallees; and besides, their wives and children are fed and provided with all things necessary, according to their condition, all the while they are from their houses. Nor do they only serve at the oar, but upon occasion lay hold of their weapons, and behave themselves bravely; for which purpose every one has his musket, darts, and scymitar allotted him, and the *Cochin-Chinenses* being of an undaunted spirit, and brave, they give good tokens of their valour, either rowing to join their enemies, or with their arms when joined. Their gallees are somewhat less, but particularly narrower than ours, but so neat and so well adorned with gold and silver, that they afford a glorious sight. Chiefly the stern,<sup>13</sup> which they account the most honourable post, is all over gold, there the captain and persons of chief note have their station;

present Nguyễn Phúc Nguyễn as the one who wanted to pardon his brothers and who stood against the mandarins who insisted on their death. See Nguyễn Khoa Chiêm, *Việt Nam Khai Quốc Chí Truyền* (Story of the Foundation of the Vietnamese State), trans. and annot. by Ngô Đức Thọ and Nguyễn Thủy Nga (Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Hội Nhà Văn, 1994). L. Cadrière sees in the latter case an attempt to present Nguyễn Phúc Nguyễn in a more favorable light; see L. Cadrière, "Le mur de Đồng Hới," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 6 (1906): 119 and n. 1; also *Dai Nam Thục Lục Tiền Biên* (Chronicle of the Nguyễn Dynasty, Premier Period), 256, and *Dai Nam Liệt Truyện Tiền Biên* (Collection of Biographies of the Nguyễn Dynasty, Premier Period), 630. Both of these documents can be found in *Dai Nam Thục Lục* (Chronicle of the Nguyễn Dynasty), vol. 1 (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Linguistic Studies, 1961), pp. 32, 287.

<sup>12</sup> In 1620, Nguyễn Phúc Nguyễn gave a daughter in marriage to the king of Cambodia, who was seeking to counter pressure from Siam with an alliance with the Vietnamese. As a result of this, in 1623 the Vietnamese were allowed to establish an outpost at the future site of Saigon. G. Coedes, *The Making of South East Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 198.

<sup>13</sup> This word is mistranslated. In the original, it is *proa*, "prow," which also fits the description of the captain's post provided by Borri. See Borri, *Relazione*, p. 88.

and the reason they give for it is, that it being the captain's duty to be the first upon any danger, it is fit he should be in the properest part of the gally for that purpose.

Among other sorts of defensive arms they use in war, they have certain oval, hollow targets,<sup>14</sup> so long that they cover a man quite, and so light, that they can manage them without any trouble. The cities of this kingdom have a great advantage in the manner of their houses, which being all of wood upon pillars of timber, as has been said before, when the enemy comes so strong, that they perceive they cannot oppose him, every man flies to the mountain with what he has, firing the houses, so that the enemy finds nothing but the ruins left by the flames, and having no place to fortify himself, nor any thing to subsist on, is forced to retire back to his own country, and the inhabitants returning to the same place in a short time, with great ease rebuild their houses.

<sup>14</sup> Borri uses the word *rotella* in the original (p. 88), which means a small wheel or a round shield. *Ibid.*

TO

SIR JOHN HOSKINS, KT.

AND

ROBERT HOOKE, ESQ.

Honoured Sirs,<sup>1</sup>

I send by this conveyance to Mr. *Charles Chamberlain*<sup>2</sup> the promised description of *Tonqueen*, wherein I think I have noted the most material passages of trade, government, and customs of the country, vice and virtue of the people, as least so far as will content and satisfy a moderate mind, and be sufficient for a new commissioner to conduct business by at his first entrance there. As to the imperfections and errors therein, you will be pleased to favour it with your exact survey and prudent correction, especially to remove or cancel what therein may be either against, or reflectingly spoken of Mons. *Tavernier*,<sup>3</sup> since the intention is to inform the reader of the truth, and not to carp and find fault with others; which when I did, was only for your particular perusal. The pictures are true and exact, tho' not according to art; the map, drawn and computed out of two others, is as near the truth as could be done in this place either by care or diligence. Of the whole the honourable president *Gyfford*<sup>4</sup> sends his judgment to you, whose liberality has chiefly supported my expenses thereon; therefore I request you will be pleased to deliver to Mr. *Charles Chamberlain* the money the said description will yield, for the president's use. And if you should think convenient to dedicate it to the right honourable company, then to make honourable and particular mention of Mr. *John Page*, Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Hooke (1635-1703), was an English physicist who conducted experiments in many fields of inquiry and was active in the Royal Society in London; for a biography, see Lisa Jardine, *The Curious Life of Robert Hooke. The Man Who Measured London* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004). Sir John Hoskins was a friend of Robert Hooke who was active in the Royal Society and served for a time as its president.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Chamberlain was an acquaintance of Robert Hooke who was active in the English East India Company.

<sup>3</sup> On Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, see the Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> William Gyfford, an agent of the English East India Company, established the English factory in Tonkin in 1672 and remained there in charge of it for four years. He was an agent in Madras from 1681 to 1684 and was then Governor of Fort St. George and President of Madras from 1684 to 1687.

*James Hobland*, Mr. *Charles Chamberlain*, and Mr. *William Moyer*,<sup>5</sup> my benefactors. I am now on a voyage to *China*, where if I can pick up any curiosity, or discover any thing worthy your sight or information, you are sure to hear from me; in the mean while I recommend myself to the continuation of your favour, as,

Fort St. George at  
Madras-pattan,  
February, 2d.  
1685-6.

Honoured Sirs,  
Your very humble devoted Servant,

Samuel Baron.

<sup>5</sup> Moyer aside, I have found evidence that these men were in the employ of the English East India Company; see the Introduction.



TO THE HONOURABLE  
**William Gyfford, Esq;**  
*President of Coast Cormandell, Bengall,*  
 &c.

AND  
*Governor of Fort St. George*

Honored Sir,

This is but a rough draught of what is in a more clear and lively manner impress'd in your honour's memory; I mean, the state and constitution of the kingdom of *Tonqueen*, since yourself was the first *English* man that, entering the country, open'd the trade, and settled there a factory for the honourable company; in effecting which your patience appear'd no less exemplary (having suffer'd strange rudeness and harsh usages from the natives, their usual welcome to new-comers) than your prudence and dexterity was eminent in that negotiation, wherein (I can say without incurring the imputation of flattery) your generosity respected the honour of your nation and common benefit much more than your particular interest, and with a liberal spirit bestow'd your wax and honey most freely on others, thinking, as that herotick *German* express'd himself to the emperor *Charles V. If my Labour is not for myself, 'tis for Posterity.*<sup>6</sup> Equal to this was your honour's deportment, affable, courteous, complaisant to the humours of those people, wherein your condescending temper was very conspicuous; which tho' it had been accustomed to live in other parts of *India* after another rate and splendor than the *Tonqueneses, Chinese* or *Japanese* willingly tolerate any stranger or foreigner to do in their country, did yet know readily how to please them, by your conformity and seasonable receding to their pride, whereby you presently so gain'd the good-will of courtiers and merchants (of which they are otherwise great niggards to new-comers, yet very loving to them that know their country and customs) as prov'd no small means to uphold afterwards the *English* name, your person, factory, and what else belong'd to your place, with honour, reputation and credit, notwithstanding the *Dutch* war,<sup>7</sup> want of shipping, supplies, and your incapacity to trade, which are moral distempers for a new-settled factory, all the time of your residence, until your departure thence, the space of well nigh six years, in which time you got much experience yourself, and gave so true and

exact a character of the country, whereof there had been before but a confus'd idea amongst the *English*, as was very advantageous to commerce.<sup>8</sup>

These, and the respects of your superintendency over the right honourable company's affairs in the South Seas, the honour of your many years acquaintance, have induc'd me to direct this description to your honour, who, as the most capable to judge and discern the truth thereof, so I hope will have the charity to construe with your innate candor my intention therein. I am sensible of the inconsiderateness of my labour herein, tho' to the best of my might, I did it as well as the troubles I was in would permit me; and that only the subject is to be taken notice of, which is such as Sir *John Haskins* and Mr. *Robert Hooke*,<sup>9</sup> my most honour'd friends, assured me, by reiterated letters out of *England*, would be taking and acceptable, whose approved judgment, which I shall always reverence, did alone encourage me to undertake this task, were it but to satisfy their curiosity and noble desires, ever constant in assiduous application to advance learning, and enrich the publick by new discoveries, which otherwise I would not have ventur'd on; but since they were the promoters thereof, I submit it to their censure, according to the following advertisement, but leave the whole disposal to yourself, as from,

Fort St. George at *Madrass-patam*, on the Coast of *Cormandell*, August 25, Anno 1685.

Honoured SIR,

Your very humble obedient Servant,

**Samuel Baron.**

<sup>8</sup> On the difficulties of the English East India Company in Tonkin during the 1670s, when Gyfford was there, see Hoang Anh Tuan, "From Japan to Manila and Back to Europe: The English Abortive Trade with Tonkin in the 1670s," *Itinerario* XXIX.3 (2005): 73-92.

<sup>9</sup> Prominent figures in the London scientific community with whom Baron was acquainted; see the Introduction.

<sup>6</sup> I have not located the source of this quotation, but Baron appears to attribute it to Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521.

<sup>7</sup> England and Holland were at war 1672-74.

## Advertisement.

MY design at first was not to undertake an historical narration of *Tonqueen*, but only to note the errors in Monsieur *Tavernier's* description of that country, as it was desired of me by Sir *John Hoskins* and Mr. *Robert Hooke* out of *England*; but having made some small progress therein, I was quickly tired with finding faults and noting mistakes, also thinking I should thereby give but small satisfaction to the curiosity of those worthy gentlemen, whose highly active genius's penetrate the very essence of the most occult things, and finding it much more easy for me to compose a new description of *Tonqueen* (the country of my nativity, and where I have been conversant with persons of all qualities and degrees) than to correct the mistakes of others; these considerations, together with ambition to do the publick acceptable service, and especially to demonstrate in some measure my thankfulness and profound respects to my much-honour'd friends Sir *John Hoskins* and Mr. *Robert Hooke*, induced me to undertake and finish this work, such as it is. I can freely declare that there is nothing inserted herein, but what I thought, to the best of my knowledge, to be exactly true and real. In dubious matters I had my informations from the most knowing and credible amongst the natives. As for the order and method, I follow'd Mons. *Tavernier*. The stile and diction thereof, since they are my first essays, must needs be very defective; therefore I intreat my friends to correct and alter what therein they may find amiss, and to dedicate it to whom they please; and in so doing they will infinitely oblige

*Their most humble Servant,*

Samuel Baron.

Note, that the original Pictures, wherof those in this Book are but a Copy, were drawn on the Place by a Tonqueeneer of eminent Quality, and according to my Judgment are done as well as Things of that nature can be.

## CHAPTER I.

# THE DESCRIPTION OF TONQUEEN

## TAVERNIERE'S ACCOUNT OF TONQUEEN ANIMADVERTED ON.<sup>1</sup>

The kingdom of *Tonqueen* has been discovered by the Portuguese above one hundred and twenty years since,<sup>2</sup> and the relations that *Padre Martin*<sup>3</sup> and *Alexander de Rodas*,<sup>4</sup> both Jesuites, give of it, is in general more true than this of *Tavernier*; for what contradictions we find in them, may be imputed to the alteration of things by mutation of time.

*Taverniere* talks of eleven or twelve voyages his brother made to *Tonqueen*, from *Achieu* [Acheh], *Batavia*,<sup>5</sup> and *Bantam*,<sup>6</sup> on the confidence of whose relation, together with what he inquired of the bonzies, or priests, that came while he was in *Bantam*, he has compiled his history,<sup>7</sup> as fabulous and full of gross absurdities as lines.

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a response to Tavernier's first chapter "A Discourse in general concerning the City of Tunquin, and of the Manner how the Author came to have knowledge thereof." See Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," in *A Collection of Several Relations and Treatises Singular and Curious* (London: A. Godbid & J. Playford, for Moses Pitt at the Angel in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1680). For more on Tavernier, see the Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> On the Portuguese arrival along the Vietnamese coasts, see Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Portugais sur les côtes du Viêt-Nam et du Campu: Etude sur les routes maritimes et les relations commerciales, d'après les sources portugaises: XVI, XVII, XVIII siècles* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> This refers to Gio. Filippo de Marini, *Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tunquin et de Lao*, trans. from Italian by L. P. L. C. C. (Paris: Cervais Clouzier, 1666).

<sup>4</sup> Alexandre de Rhodés, *Histoire du royaume de Tunquin et des grands progrès que la prédication de l'évangile y a faits en la conversion des infidèles, depuis l'année 1627 jusques à l'année 1646*, trans. from Latin by R. P. Henry Albi (Lyon: Jean Baptiste Devenet, 1651).

<sup>5</sup> Modern Jakarta, headquarters of the Dutch East India Company in Asia.

<sup>6</sup> A major port and kingdom of that time on the western coast of Java. The Asian headquarters of the English East India Company was located there until 1682.

<sup>7</sup> Tavernier (p. 2) says his brother "... had made Eleven or Twelve Voyages from Batavia, Bantam, and Achem, to Tunquin. Other Observations I collected from the Tonquinese themselves, with whom I have had several Discourses, during the time that I was at Batavia and Bantam, where they principally trade. And that which gave me more light was this, that those Merchants several times bring along with them some of their Bonzies or Priests, as also some of their Learned Men to teach their Children to Write and Read."



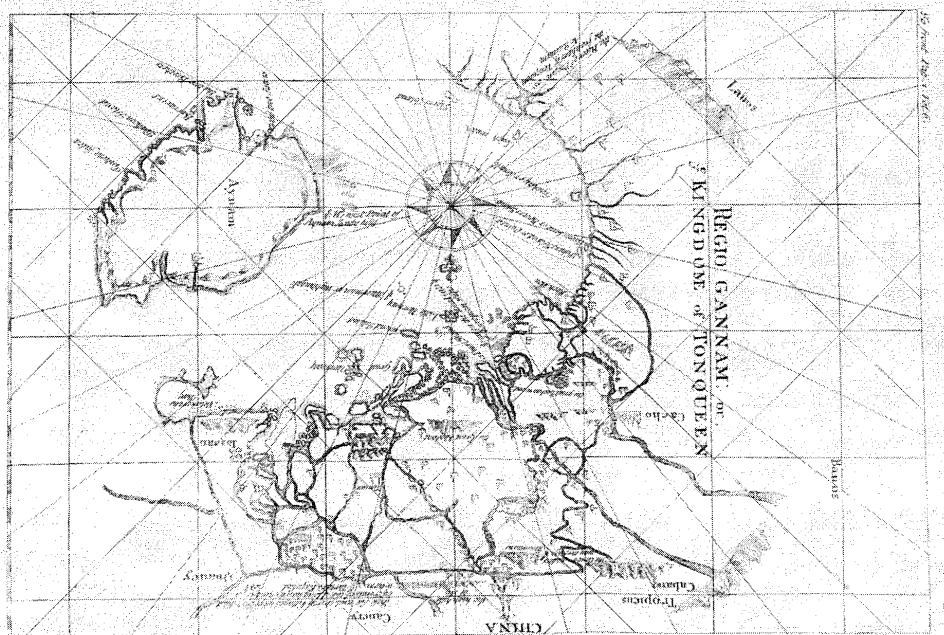


Plate 1: Regio Gannam or the Kingdom of Tonqueen

For first, the *Tonquenses* have no bonzes or priests,<sup>8</sup> however they came to *Bantam* and *Batavia*; and then he saith, when the *Tonquenses* make voyages, they take their wives and families with them; I suppose he means those voyages they make in the river of *Tonquien*, from one village to another: but for foreign voyages they are altogether unacquainted with them, unless it be some few of the poorer sort that go to attend strangers, or are forced otherwise for a livelihood. He notes how the *Tonquenses* were ravished with admiration, when he shewed them his Atlas, and some particular maps about the compoſure and ſtructure of the whole world, and its ſeveral kingdoms and ſtates,<sup>9</sup> which they heeded as much as a world in the moon. Neither can I hear of a *Taverniere* that has made eleven or twelve voyages to *Tonquien* on his own account; only thus much I have heard, that there has been one *Taverniere*, a purser in the *Dutch* ſervice, and once in *Tonquien*.<sup>10</sup>

He commends his brother for a perſon of courage and cunning,<sup>11</sup> how juſtly I cannot tell; but this I am ſure, he has uſed but little cordiality, and leſs ſincerity, notwithſtanding all his proteſtations, in his account of *Tonquien*. He magnifies the great ſums of money his brother carried always with him, when he went on that voyage; but it is too well known what a purser in the *Dutch* ſervice can do, and what they are allowed to do; hindring ſo ſtrictly the private trade.

He talks of a large preſent he gave the king and prince,<sup>12</sup> together with his favourable reception and familiar converſation with them; if this be true, I ſay the *Tonqueneſe* are much degenerated, yet it cannot be denied, but that ſtrangers at their firſt entrance into this country, had, in many reſpects, better uſage than at preſent; but not ſo, as to permit themſelves to play with a foreigner the good companion: at this time they keep their diſtance to all ſtrangers, making but ſmall account of them.

<sup>8</sup> In ſeeming to ſay that there are no bonzes, Baron appears to contradict what he ſays in Chapter 18: "... they have no priſt ... to preach and propagate their doctrine; all they have, are their Sayes, or Bonzes, as M. Taverniere calls them (which, by miſtake, he terms priſts) which are a kind of friers or monks." "Sayes" is apparently a pluralized tranſcription of the Vietnamese word *sai*, which today generally means temple warden or a layperſon who adminiſters temple affairs, but which in the ſeventeenth century meant a Buddhist monk or nun; ſee Alexandre de Rhodes, *Dictionarium Annamiticum, Lusitanum, et Latinum* (Rome, Sac. Congreg. 1651), col. 671. Baron objects to conflating *sai* with priſts, or bonzes. Bonzes, according to him, are "a kind of friers or monks," while he underſtands priſts in a European Catholic ſenſe as members of a global hierarchy. Here he reads Tavernier as ſaying that bonzes are the ſame as priſts, and he objects by aſſerting that priſts do not exiſt among the Tonkineſe. While it appears that he is ſaying there are no bonzes, this is not what he intends.

<sup>9</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 2: "And as I was never without an Atlas and ſome other particular Maps, they [the Bonzes and other Learned Men] were raviſh'd with admiration, when I ſhew'd them the Structure and Compoſure of the whole World, and the Situation of its ſeveral Kingdoms and Eſtates."

<sup>10</sup> Tavernier's brother oſtenſibly went to Tonkin before his death in 1648, at which time Baron's father would have been reſiding in Tonkin on behalf of the Dutch Eaſt India Company (ſee the Introduction), and when Baron himſelf was probably already a child or teenager, reſiding with his father.

<sup>11</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 2: "My Brother, who was a perſon both cunning and courageous ..."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3: "... a very noble Sword, of which the Handle and Hilt were all over encha'd with Rubies and Emeralds, with a Backſword Blade. To this he added a pair of Piſtols, adorn'd and inlaid with Silver, a Perſian Saddle and Bridle, embroider'd with Gold and Silver, a Bow and Quiver full of Arrows, and ſix Pictures ..."

To kiss the king's hand, is not the *Tonqueen* mode, much less permitted to strangers: and when he spoke the *Malayan* language so fluently, he might as well have spoken *French* to them, that understood not a word of either.<sup>13</sup> When he played amongst those lords, I wonder what game it was that he lost so many thousand crowns at, as he mentioned,<sup>14</sup> but it is most to be admired, that a calf and two jars of *Tonqueen* arrack, the usual largess and liberality of this king, (water distilled out of rice) should supply his great losses. He farther tells you, that by the great familiarity his brother had at court, and by the great discourses he had with a great many *Tonquenses*, (who never stir out of country, however he met them at *Bantam* and *Batavia*) he laid the foundation of his work, which is both faithful and exact: Furthermore he saith, no other consideration, than speaking of truth has invited him to undertake this relation;<sup>15</sup> all which being notorious contradictions and false tales, shame, indeed, the author the more.

Our author, as all other *Europeans*, terms and intitles the general or *Choua*, king: because he disposes of the kingdom at his pleasure, receiving all foreign ambassadors, except that of *China*. However, this is a mistake: for they have their king or *Boua*, though he signifies no more than a cypher, as will be noted in several places of this relation.<sup>16</sup>

He not only vaunts of his cuts, which he says were drawn on the place, and will contribute much to the divertissement of the reader, but also praises, for it's exactness, the map which he gives of the country;<sup>17</sup> than which nothing can be more false, for

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Tavernier, speaking of Tonkin (p. 2): "My Brother ... soon grew familiar with the Malaye, which is the Language of the Learned in those quarters of Asia, as Latin is among Us in Europe." Further (p. 3): "Thereupon having order to attend the Court, and coming to kiss the king's hands, the whole Assembly was surpris'd to hear a Stranger, born in a Country so far distant speak the Malaye Language so fluently." Dampier, writing about his observations in Tonkin in 1688, is of Baron's opinion: "But for the Malayan Tongue, which Monsieur Tavernier's Brother in his History of Tonquin says is the Court Language, I never could hear by any Person that it is spoken there, tho' I have made particular Inquiry about it: neither can I be of his Opinion in that Matter." William Dampier, "Mr. Dampier's Voyages, Vol. II, Part I. His voyage from Achin in Sumatra, to Tunquin, and other Places in the East-Indies," in *A Collection of Voyages, in Four Volumes* (London: James and John Knapton, 1729), II:59.

<sup>14</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 3, where he is speaking of his brother at "the Court of Tunquin": "But that which fix'd him more in the good opinion and favour of the King and Lords of the Court, was his frolic and gentle behaviour in playing with them for several large Sums, insomuch that being one that ventur'd deep, he lost above 20000 Crowns in one Voyage. However the King, who was a generous Prince, would not suffer him to be a loser, but gave him those considerable Presents that supplied his losses."

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 4: "Thus you see the Grounds and Foundations of this Relation, which is both fanciful and exact, and by which that noble Country, of which the Descriptions hitherto have been so obscure and uncertain, shall be truly discover'd and set forth, such as it is; declaring withal, that no other Consideration or Interest, then that of speaking truth, has incited me to undertake this Description."

<sup>16</sup> The distinction here is between the *vua*, vernacular Vietnamese for "king," which referred to the Lê emperor, who was a powerless prisoner of his palace, and the *chia*, "lord," which referred to the leader of the Trịnh family, who was the actual ruler, commonly understood as "the king" by European visitors of that time. For example, see Chapter 15 of Gio. Filippo de Martini, *Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tunquin et de Lao*, pp. 301-327, wherein the funeral rites of the deceased *chia* Trịnh Tráng in 1657 are narrated as the funeral of "the king."

<sup>17</sup> A reference to Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 4: "And I dare ingage, that the Map of the Country, and the Cuts which were drawn upon the place, will no less contribute to the divertissement of the Reader, then to the Explanation of the

compare it with our sea draughts, 'twill plainly appear what it is: But as fabulous stories and fictions, inventions at pleasure, are pleasing only to the ignorant, so 'tis most certain, the ingenious reader will blame him for promising so much and using so little probity in his history.

Matter which they contain." By "cuts" is meant engravings for illustrations; "drawn upon the place" means that they were drawn in Tonkin, at the places they depict.

## CHAPTER II.

OF THE SITUATION AND EXTENT OF  
TONQUEEN.<sup>1</sup>

We have no more reason to admire why our predecessors had no earlier knowledge of this kingdom than they had of that of *China*, because its discovery was something posterior to that; for the *Portuguese* had no sooner discovered the last, but they sent out ships to visit this also.

It is true, this kingdom was a province of *China* formerly, and pays tribute still to that emperor. But that was not the reason why we had no sooner knowledge thereof,<sup>2</sup> considering these people have been governed by their native princes for above these four hundred years without interruption, which was long before the *Portuguese* came to make their discoveries in *India*. The true reason seems to be, that the people did never stir abroad, nor do yet, for commerce or other association; and they somewhat affect in this the *Chinese* vanity, thinking all other people to be barbarous, imitating their government, learning, characters, &c. yet hate their persons.

I do not know why *Taverniere* saith most people should believe this country to be in a very hot climate, considering it is situated under the tropick, and some part of it more to the northward; nevertheless he affirms it to be very temperate, by reason of the great number of rivers (and altogether free from those sand-hills and barren mountains that cause such heat in *Commaroon*,<sup>3</sup> and other places in the gulf of *Persia*) that water it, together with the rain that falls in its season;<sup>4</sup> whereas the truth thereof is, that the rains, indeed, generally fall in the months of *May*, *June*, *July* and *August*, and sometimes sooner, which moistens the ground, but cause no fresh breezes at all, on the contrary, the said two months of *July* and *August*, make the weather here unsufferably hot. Doubtless the country would be plentiful in fruits, were there not so many inhabitants, who living by rice chiefly, find therefore the greater necessity to cultivate what ground they have with that grain, not neglecting the least spot.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Here Baron is referring to Tavernier, Chapter 2: "Of the Situation and Extent of the Kingdom of Tunquin." This chapter of Baron's is largely a running commentary upon Tavernier.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 5: "We shall have the less reason to admire wherefore our predecessors had so little knowledge of this Kingdom, when we consider that having formerly been a considerable part of China, the inhabitants in the same manner as the Chinese did, kept themselves close within their own bounds, never minding to have any Commerce with other People, whom they contemned and lookt upon as Barbarians come from the other part of the World."

<sup>3</sup> This name remains unidentified.

<sup>4</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 5: "Most people believe this Country to lye in a very hot Climate; nevertheless it is now known to be very temperate, by reason of the great number of Rivers that water it, which together with the Rains that fall in their Seasons, cause a brisk freshness of the Air."

To the north-east of this kingdom lies the province of *Canton*; to the west it is bounded by the kingdoms of *Loos* and the *Bowes*,<sup>5</sup> to the north it borders on two other provinces of *China*, *Yunnan* [Yunnan] and *Quanci* [Guangxi], or *Ali*;<sup>6</sup> to the south and south-east on *Cochin-china*. The climate is temperate and wholesome, from *September* till *March*, sometimes very cold in *January* and *February*, though frost and snow are never seen here; for the months of *April*, *May* and *June* are not so healthful, both because of the rains and the foginess of the air, and the sun's coming to the zenith; but *June*, *July* and *August* are excessive hot months. The winds here are divided between the north and south for six months and six months; the country is delightful from *May* till *August*, the trees being then in their verdure, and the fields all covered with paddy, very pleasant to the beholders.

The great winds that are called amongst our seamen the hurricanes, and known here by the name of *Tonfoons*,<sup>7</sup> reign on this and the adjacent coasts, and the seas thereof are very terrible; but the time of their coming is very uncertain, sometimes once in five or six years, and sometimes in eight or nine; and though the wind is not known in other oriental seas by that name, and with that excessive violence, yet that which is called the *Elephant* in the bay of *Bengal* and the coast of *Comandel*,<sup>8</sup> is not much inferior to this; and the sad effects thereof are but too often experienced by the seamen. I cannot find an astronomer in all *Tonqueen*, to ask from whence those winds should proceed, so I cannot affirm that they are caused by the exhalations of the mines of *Japan*.<sup>9</sup>

As for the extent of the country, which he makes equal to that of *France*, it is a gross mistake; for this kingdom is reckoned by men experienced, to be not much bigger than *Portugal*; but may be thought to contain four times the number of inhabitants. *Taverniere* makes its limits to be unknown, forgetting that he had so lately described the borders and extent thereof.<sup>10</sup>

As for islands belonging to this kingdom, there are several in the bay of *Tonqueen*, the chief whereof is called by the natives *Tuon Bene*,<sup>11</sup> and by the *Dutch*, *Rovers island*. It is situated in the latitude of 19 degrees 15 minutes north; is long one and a half, and broad half a league at most, the better part high land, and distant from the main one league, between which the main sea, ships may pass, as the *Dutch*

<sup>5</sup> This term, or variants of it (Baous on Baron's map), appears in some early European accounts in reference to the mountains west of modern northern Vietnam. In Chapter XI, Baron says that part of Bowes was "maintain'd as conquer'd lands [by the Tonkinese], that people being of a different language and manner." This is plausibly a reference to the Tai rulers of the Sipsong Panna in the region of the modern border of Laos and China between the Mekong and Black (Sông Đà) Rivers.

<sup>6</sup> Ali or Ali-Lao was an ancient Sino-Vietnamese name for upland polities in the regions that are now along the borders of China, Laos, and Vietnam.

<sup>7</sup> Typhoon, in Vietnamese *đại phong*, "big wind."

<sup>8</sup> The Coromandel coast on the Bay of Bengal is in southeast India.

<sup>9</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 6: "The Astrologers of those parts believe that these terrible Tempests proceed from the Exhalations that rise out of the Mines of Japan."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.: "In this fair extent of land, almost equal to that of France, are several Provinces, whose limits are not well known . . ."

<sup>11</sup> This term is perhaps Vietnamese *Tuân Bân*, meaning "patrol station/harbor"; French colonial maps identified it as "Island of Biên Sơn" (Biên Mountain), and on modern maps it is identified as Nghi Sơn, at the border between Nghệ An and Thanh Hóa provinces.

did formerly; but the navigator must observe to keep the island side aboard, within a musket shot; where you will find six, seven, and seven and a half fathoms, ozy ground. On the same side of the island, which is its west part, are two small bays, the northernmost has a small pearl bank, but not rich, yet none dare to fish here without the king's special grant. In both the bays there is sweet water, which we found to be exceeding good, and esteemed the best we tasted there. At the south-west point of this island, is a ridge of rocks, extending from the said point 100 paces into the sea, and may be discovered at half ebb, by the breach thereon; for the rest, a clear coast.

Towards the north-west, is a fair bay, three fathom and a half and four fathom water, clay ground; here resort many fishing boats, besides what appertain to this village, whose inhabitants I compute between three or four hundred persons, most fishermen.

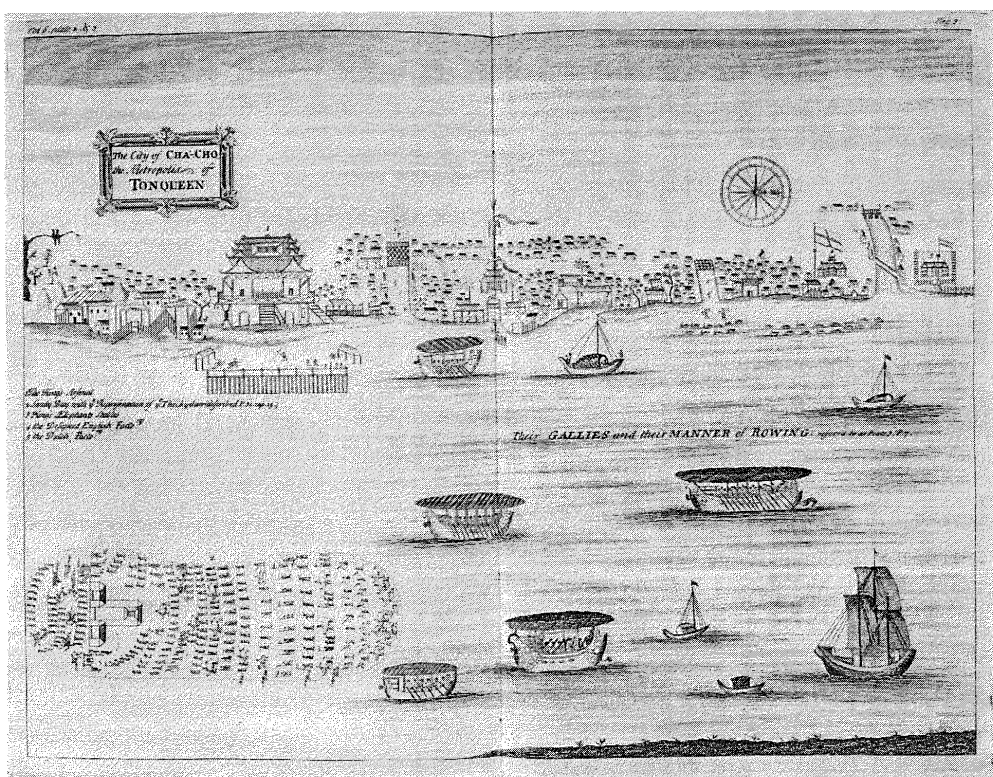
In this island is the watch-house general, which is a place of the greatest profit in the kingdom of *Tonqueen*: for all trading boats, either to the province of *Tingany* [Thanh Hóa] or *Guian* [Nghê An], or from thence to the north, must stop here and pay custom, viz. for a large boat about half the value of a dollar and half, with some presents for the waiters, the rest proportionable; so that the customs of this place cannot yield less than a million of dollars *per annum*.

As for the ground, it is stony and mountainous, therefore not proper to manure; cattle we saw but few (tho' inhabitants told us of many antelopes that sheltered amongst the rocks and shrubs of the mountains) so that rice and other provisions for sustenance, are brought hither from the adjacent shore. Some good regulations would make this place plentiful, and with small expence this port might be a good one.

For cities and towns, excepting that of *Ca-cho*,<sup>12</sup> there are not above two or three in the whole kingdom of any note. As for *Aldens* or villages, questionless the number is great and more than I can exactly affirm, or any man else that hath not made it his business to inquire after them; neither is it an easy manner to find the truth thereof: the city of *Ca-cho* is the metropolis of *Tonqueen*, lieth in the latitude 21 degrees north, about 40 leagues from the sea, and may, for its capaciousness, be compared with many cities in *Asia*, and superior to most for populousness, especially on the first and fifteenth of their new moon, being their market days, or grand *Bazaar*, when the people from the adjacent villages flock thither with their trade, in such numbers, as is almost incredible; several of the streets, tho' broad and spacious, are then so crowded that one finds enough to do if he can sometimes advance through the multitude a hundred paces in half an hour. Every different commodity sold in this city is appointed to a particular street, and these streets again allotted to one, two, or more villages, the inhabitants whereof are only privileged to keep shops in them, much in the nature of the several companies or corporations in *European* cities. The courts of the king, general, princes, &c. *Grandes*,<sup>13</sup> and high courts of justice are kept here, of which I can only say, they stand on large tracts of ground; the principal structure makes but a mean appearance, being built of wood, the rest of their houses of bamboos and clay, not well compacted; few of brick except the factories of strangers, which out-vie the rest. Stupendous, indeed, are the triple walls of the old

<sup>12</sup> Kê Chô ("marketplace"), modern Hanoi.

<sup>13</sup> From Italian *grandezza* or Spanish *grandeza*, meaning "grand, magnificent," here used to indicate palatial architecture.



Plates 2/3: "The City of Cha-Cho, the Metropolis of Tonqueen." 1. The King's Arsenal. 2. Sandy Bay [Island] with the Representation of the Theekydaw. 3. King's Elephants' Stables. 4. The Designed English Factory. 5. The Dutch Factory.

city and palace; for by the ruins they appear to have been strong fabricks with noble large gates, paved with a kind of marble; the palace to have been about six or seven miles in circumference; its gates, courts, apartments, &c. testify amply its former pomp and glory. In this city is likewise quartered a formidable militia, to be ready on all occasions; and here also standeth the king's arsenal or magazine for war, seated on the bank of the river, near a sandy island, on which the *Thecadau*<sup>14</sup> is kept, as hereafter will be mentioned. The river is called by the natives *Songkoy*,<sup>15</sup> or the head river: it rises in *China*, and after it has rolled many hundred leagues, it passes here and disgorgeth itself in the bay of *Ayram*,<sup>16</sup> by eight or nine mouths, most of them navigable for vessels of small draught. This river is exceeding commodious for the city, since all sorts of merchandise are brought hither as to the epitome of the kingdom, by an infinite number of boats trading up and down the country; yet they have their houses in their respective *Aldens*, and do not live altogether in their boats as *Taverniere* reports, but when they are voyaging.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter XV, where this is spelled *Thekydau*.

<sup>15</sup> Song Cai, "the main river," (now called Sông Hồng, "Red River").

<sup>16</sup> *Hai-nam*, Vietnamese for the island of Hainan; the mid-seventeenth century Jesuit map of Vietnam identifies the Gulf of Tonkin as the Gulf of Hainan, Baron's "bay of Ayram."

<sup>17</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 6: "... many of the People choose rather to [live] upon the Water then upon the Land: so that you shall see the greatest part of their Rivers covered with Boates, which serve them instead of Houses; and which are very neat, though they also keep their Cattel in them."

### CHAPTER III.

## OF THE NATURE AND PRODUCTIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF TONQUEEN.<sup>1</sup>

This country is for the most part low and flat, not unlike the united provinces, especially for its moats and banks. The hills make the frontiers towards the north, west and south: it is watered by one special river, which disgorgeth itself into the sea, by many branches, most of them navigable for ships of mean burthen. These rivers swarm with boats and large barks, which make it very commodious for traders: indeed in this country grows neither corn nor wine, which is not occasioned by the want of rains, for both of them require rather dry than wet ground; but by reason the inhabitants do not much care for them, as being ignorant of their goodness, and therefore do not plant them. Rice, indeed, is the chief sustenance of these people; and the country produces sufficient quantities thereof, and if this grain would have grown only by the rains of the months of *June* and *July*,<sup>2</sup> we should not have experienced the sad effects of a most dreadful and calamitous famine, that swept away so many millions of souls, in these two preceding years.

From the rice they distil a liquor called arrack, but much inferior to aquavite. Their ploughs, and the manner of using them, are much after the *Chinese* fashion, described in the history of *China*: the paddy they tread out with their feet, wherein their practice has made them very expert.

The fruits are equally good in their kinds with those of other oriental countries, but their oranges, far exceed all that I have tasted: what *Taverniere* calls a palm-tree, is, indeed, a cocoa-nut,<sup>3</sup> the pulp within is white, and tastes something like an almond; this fruit is so plentiful in *Siam*, that they lade ships with the oil that is made of the said pulp, to supply their neighbours, which is used to burn in lamps.

The liquor thereof is very cold, and pleasant enough, but reckoned bad for the nerves: questionless it is the most useful tree that is found in *India*, serving for meat, drink, cloathing, firing, building, &c.

The *Guava* is a fruit much like his description; but he is mightily out in the effects thereof, for whether green or ripe, it is always binding, but not usually eaten green.<sup>4</sup>

The *Papay* [papaya] is a fruit indeed resembling a melon, and somewhat of the taste, not unpleasant.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter III: "Of the Quality of the Kingdom of Tunquin."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7: "... in all the country there grows neither corn nor wine, by reason of the want of rain, which never falls but in the Months of June and July."

<sup>3</sup> Coconut, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: "[Guava] if they be eaten before they are ripe they bind the belly, whereas if they be eaten when they are come to full maturity they work a contrary effect."



The *Arreak* [Areca], called by the *Malays*, *Penang*, grows straight upright, bearing no branch, but at the top, like a crown; the fruit of which is in bigness like a large pigeon's egg, which most *Indians* use to eat with the leaf called Beetle [betel] by the *Portuguese*, and *Sera* by the *Malays*: it is good to sweeten the breath, fasten the teeth, and revive the spirits: in chewing, the juice thereof turns red; it is so much in use, that they think they do not make their friends welcome without presenting them with a dish of it. The *Tonqueuese*, *Siamese*, *Malays* and *Javas*, had rather lose a third of their diet than be without it. They have a fig, called by them *Hungs*,<sup>5</sup> in taste something like a carrot, but much more pleasant; not at all like our *European* figs.

The other sort, called *Bonana*, or plantains, which he calls *Adam's* figs, some are in length above a span, some less.<sup>6</sup>

The high-ways are here and there beset with trees and many sheds, where they sell tea and beetle, &c. very commodious for travellers: and for those exceeding great trees, that shade so many thousands of men, called the *Banian-tree*, I cannot contradict him;<sup>7</sup> but what I have seen at *Swallow Marrene*, at *Surrai*,<sup>8</sup> far exceed any of these in bigness.

In this country we have the fruit *Lechea* [lychee], call'd *Bejay*,<sup>9</sup> by the natives; in great plenty; which indeed no where else comes to maturity but in latitude from 20 to 30 degrees north: It grows on high trees, the leaves resemble somewhat the laurel; the fruits in clusters on the branches, shew like so many hearts, of the bigness of a small hen egg; when ripe of a crimson colour; the shell thin and rough, yet easy to be pulled off; the kernel is full of a white juice. This fruit is of an excellent taste, and most pleasant to the sight, but it doth not last above forty days in season: the time of its maturity is *April*, about when the General will cause his *chiang* [chop] or seal to be fixed on most trees of the best *Lachea*,<sup>10</sup> in the country, belong to whom they will, which obliges the owner not only not to meddle with his own, but also to watch narrowly that others do not touch them, which would be to his peril, since it is ingrossed by the court, who allow him nothing for his fruit or pains.

The fruit called *jeam*,<sup>11</sup> or *Lungung*,<sup>12</sup> (that is, *Dragons-eggs*) by the *Chinese*, is very plentiful here: the tree much as the former, the kernel white, but exceeding luscious; the fruit round; and less than a small plum, the skin not rough, of a pale olive colour, and near to a wither'd leaf. This fruit, though it pleases many of the *Tonqueuese*, yet it is reckon'd hot and unwholesome. The season is *May*, and lasts 'till *July*.

<sup>5</sup> Hông, see Ch. Crevost and Ch. Lemaire, *Catalogue des produits de l'Indochine, Tome Ier: Produits alimentaires et plantes fourragères* (Hanoi: Gouvernement Général de l'Indochine, 1917), pp. 257-160.

<sup>6</sup> Banana. See Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 8. A span, about nine inches, was measured from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger on a hand with thumb and fingers spread.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.: "... there are some of these Trees so big that two or three thousand men may stand under them...."

<sup>8</sup> Surai is a city in southeastern Gujarat state, west-central India, where the English established their first Indian factory in 1612. Swallow Marrene is unidentified.

<sup>9</sup> Apparently a transcription of Vietnamese *uni*.

<sup>10</sup> Spelled *Lechea* at the beginning of this paragraph.

<sup>11</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>12</sup> Longyan, commonly Anglicized as Longan, *long nahn* in Vietnamese.

The *Na*,<sup>13</sup> or as the *Portuguese* call it, *Annona*,<sup>14</sup> *Pompeinmoor*,<sup>15</sup> and two or three sorts of plums, with other kind of *Indian* fruits (except *Durrions* [durian], which will grow only in hot countries; that is, from *Siam* towards the South, as *Mallaya* [Malaya], *Mallacam* [Malacca], *Java*, &c.) are to be found here; but what exceeds all I have tasted in other parts of that kind, is the *Jaca*,<sup>16</sup> or *Myle*,<sup>17</sup> in *Tonqueen*. This is the largest fruit, I think, in the world, and because of its bigness provident nature has placed its growth on the stock or body of the tree, not on the branches, lest it should not be sufficient to bear the burthen. The skin when green, is very hard; but ripe, of a yellow colour, and easy to be cut with a knife. There are several sorts of them, but that which eats dyest, without sticking either to the fingers or lips, is the best and pleasantest. The greatest part are of a slimy substance, and, as it were, a yellow pap covers the nuts, which lie in little holes. Some of the poorer people will boil or roast the nuts, and eat them, which have a kind of taste like our chestnuts, but are reckon'd hurtful to the lungs.

*Taverniere* tells a long story of the rare mice<sup>18</sup> that are in this country, of many sorts, yet I never was at a feast of any, and therefore am no competent judge of their daintiness; I know the *Portuguese* eat them physically in several distempers.

The next thing to be taken notice of, is a particular kind of birds-nests, which indeed are in great esteem amongst all *Indians*, and kept at a great price, being taken as great restoratives, and by some counted stimulaters to venery, but *Taverniere* saith, they are not to be found but in the four islands of *Cochin-china* A.B.C.D.<sup>19</sup> which I am sure is a great mistake, neither do I know those islands, or of any birds-nests to be found in *Cochin-china*. The birds which makes these nests are less than swallows. As to the form and figure of these birds-nests, they are much as he describes them, and the greatest quantities of them come from *Jehor* [Johore], *Relio* [Riau], *Pattany* [Patan], and other *Malayan* countries; but that they are, when boiled, of that exceeding fragrance and odoriferousness, as he pretends, is a fiction.<sup>20</sup> These nests are laid to soak in warm water two hours, then pulled out in strings, the smaller the better, and so stewed with hens, pigeons, or any other flesh, with a little water: In stewing they dissolve almost to jelly without either taste or smell.

<sup>13</sup> Vietnamese *na* is usually translated as custard-apple.

<sup>14</sup> The scientific name is *Annona squamosa*; see Crevost and Lemaire, *Catalogue des Produits de l'Indochine*, p. 193.

<sup>15</sup> Probably the French *Pamplemousse*, Vietnamese *bủi*, similar to a grapefruit.

<sup>16</sup> From *Malayalam caka*, called jak, jack, or jack-fruit in English.

<sup>17</sup> Vietnamese *mít*.

<sup>18</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," pp. 8-9, describes bats (tree mice) "as big as a good Pullet, in whom their wings are above a foot and a half long" who roost hanging upside down in trees: "They are accounted a great dainty among the *Portugals*, who leave their Pullets to eat them." Tavernier says he ate them in the company of *Portuguese* and they tasted like chicken (pullets).

<sup>19</sup> This is a reference to Tavernier's map.

<sup>20</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 9: "... All the Spices of the East put together do not give that effectual relish and savour as these nests do, to the meats and dishes wherein they are used. ... You would believe in eating those Meats which are seasoned therewith, that those Nests were composed of all the Spices in the Orient." Also pages 41-42: "... they have those Birds-nests ... which give the Meat a tast of almost all sorts of Spices."

And as M. Taverniere is very erroneous in his map, so I do not know nor have I heard of those islands, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, that afford, as he says, such infinite numbers of tortoises. The goodness of the said tortoises is sufficiently known to our English seamen, in their homeward bound voyages; but that the *Tonqueenese* or *Cochin-chinese* do not believe that they have entertain'd their friends at banquet as they ought, 'till the tortoise is brought in, is altogether fabulous; for when we were at the island *Tuon Bene*, or according to the *Dutch*, *Rovers Island*,<sup>21</sup> a tortoise of about twenty pounds weight was brought to the custom house, where I lodged, to be sold, and the *Tonqueenese* not caring to buy it, I had it for a small matter. Moreover, coming from *Siam* I touch'd at *Pulo Uby*,<sup>22</sup> where my mariners took five or six very large tortoises, and brought them on board, but the *Tonqueenese* seamen that were with me (who were compell'd to take up that employ, because of great famine that ravaged their country) would not touch them; neither do I know, as he asserts, that any of those tortoises are wont to be pickled by either of these two nations, or that there is any commerce carry'd on therewith amongst them; therefore I wonder how Monsieur *Taverniere* could dream of a war between them, merely on account of catching them.<sup>23</sup>

*Tonqueen* affords no great store of *Ananas* or *Pine-apples*.<sup>24</sup> The *Citrons* he mentions are not altogether so large as those of *Europe*,<sup>25</sup> which look green before they are ripe, and being mature look yellow.

They make good store of silks in the kingdom of *Tonqueen*, of which both rich and poor make themselves garments, since they can purchase them as cheap almost as outlandish calicoes.

As for sweet-smelling flowers, tho' I do not profess myself a florist, yet I know above two sorts in *Tonqueen*; but what he calls the *Bague*,<sup>26</sup> I cannot smell out. For, first, there is a beautiful rose, of a white colour mix'd with purple; and another of almost the same kind, red and yellow; it grows on a bush without prickles or thorns, but has no scent.

The flower that is nothing else but a bud, resembles a caper, but much lesser, smells as fragrant and odoriferous as any flower I know, and will retain the scent above a fortnight, tho' off the tree; the ladies of the court use it amongst their wearing apparel.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter II.

<sup>22</sup> Island off the southern tip of the Camau Peninsula, called Poulo Obi on many colonial maps, today in Vietnamese called Hon Khoai.

<sup>23</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," pp. 9-10: "The Tunquineses and Cochinchineses do not believe they have entertained their friends at a banquet as they ought to do, till the Tortoises are brought in. Those two Nations pickle up great quantities of them, and send them abroad, which is a vast trade among them; and indeed the chiefest occasion of the Wars between them is, because the Cochinchineses do all they can to hinder the Tunquineses to fish for them, alledging that those seas and islands belong to them."

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 10: "Tunquin also affords great store of Anana's, ..."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.: "... Orange trees, of which there are of two sorts: the one that bears a fruit no bigger than an Abricot; the other bigger than those of Portugal."

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.: "As for sweet smelling Flow'rs, the Tunquineses have but one sort, which they call the Flow'r of Bague. It grows like a large Nosegay, and the Branches of the Shrub that bear it, spread themselves crawlingly upon the ground."

The *Indian Lilly* [lily] grows here as in several other parts of *India*; the shape somewhat resembles the *European lily*, but is a great deal less; it grows on a pretty tree, is of white colour, and yields a good scent, tho' a little faintish.

Here is a small flower, snow white, in scent like jessamine [jasmine], but more vigorous; it grows on a low tree, or rather shrub: in *Persia* there are such great quantities of it, that they load whole ships with the water distilled from it. These flowers being of no great esteem among the natives, I shall pass them by.

Here are plenty of sugar-canes, but they have no great skill to refine the sugar they make from them; however, they do it after their manner, and use it, but not after meals, as *Taverniere* saith, for concoction.<sup>27</sup>

Tigers and harts here are, but not many; apes in great plenty; of cows, hogs, hens, ducks, geese, &c. there is no want; their horses are small, but very mettlesome and lively, and were it not that they are so seldom rid, and kept too tender, they might be of good use, and fit for service.

Their elephants are all trained up for war, and are not of that prodigious bigness he would make one believe, for I have seen larger in *Siam*; neither are they nimble than other elephants that are taught to lie down for the rider to mount.<sup>28</sup>

They have many cats,<sup>29</sup> but no great mousers, which defect is pretty well supplied by their dogs, which are fit for little else.

Birds here are not many, but wild fowl in abundance.

Near the sea-side and in the city they have a great many musketoes [mosquitos], but in the country they are not so much troubled with them: Those that will be free of them must either smoke their room, or lie in close curtains, made of thin silks for that purpose. The cold northern wind drives them away, and frees the country of those tormentors for a while.

What he saith of the white emmets is true.<sup>30</sup> This vermin is very mischievous, in *Siam* hardly any house is free from them, so that merchants are forced to make heares, and to rub the feet thereof with oil of earth, (which scent they cannot endure) in order to secure their merchandize.

The way of pickling hen or duck eggs, as *Taverniere* describes, is true, but these eggs serve only for sauces, and not to be eaten otherwise.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: "As they have great store of sugar, so they eat very much, while it is yet in the cane, not having the true art to refine it: and that which they do grossly refine, they make into little loaves weighing about half a pound. They eat very much, making use of it always after Meals to help digestion."

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 11: "These elephants are of a prodigious bigness, neither are there any so tall nor so nimble in any part of Asia; for they will bow themselves, and stoop so low, that you may get on their backs without help."

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.: "They have no cats ..."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.: "... the infinite numbers of white Emmets, which though they are but little, have teeth so sharp, that they will eat down a wooden post in a short time."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 12, has a paragraph on pickling eggs.



# OF THE RICHES, TRADE, AND MONEY OF THE KINGDOM OF TONQUEEN.<sup>1</sup>

The chief riches, and indeed the only staple commodity, is silk, raw and wrought, of the raw the *Portuguese* and *Castilians*, in former days, the *Hollanders* lately, and at present the *Chinese*, export good quantities to *Japan*, &c. Of their wrought silks, the *English* and *Dutch* expend the most.

This kingdom has no lignum aloes<sup>2</sup> at all, but what is imported by foreign traders.

Musk we have here brought from *Bowes* and *China* annually, sometimes the quantity of five or six *Peculis*,<sup>3</sup> sometimes less; neither have they any gold but what comes from *China*. Their silver is brought in by *English*, *Dutch*, and *Chinese* trading to *Japan*. They have iron and lead mines, which afford them just enough of those minerals to serve their occasions.

Their domestic trade consists in rice, salt fish, and other sustenance; little raw and wrought silk for their own wear. They likewise drive a commerce with *Bowes* and *Ai*, though with no great profit, by reason of high expenses and large presents to the *Eunuchs*, who command the avenues; nor do the *Chinese* that pass those ways fare better, being often exacted upon, and sometimes stripped of all they have, by the ravenous *Mandarens*. And since it is one of the policies of the court not to make the subjects rich, lest they should be proud and ambitious, and aspire to greater matters, the king connives at those disorders, and oppresses them with heavy taxes and impositions; and should he know that any persons were to exceed the ordinary mean of a private subject, they would incur the danger of losing all, on some pretence or other, which is a great discouragement to the industrious and necessitates them to bury their wealth, having no means to improve it.

As for foreign traders, a new-comer suffers, besides hard usage in his buying and selling, a thousand inconveniences; and no certain rates on merchandizes imported or exported being imposed, the insatiable *Mandarens* cause the ships to be runnaged, and take what commodities may likely yield a price at their own rates, using the king's name to cloak their griping and villainous extortions, and for all this there is no remedy but patience.

Yet strangers that are experienced here are less subject to those irregularities and oppressions, escaping their clutches, tho' not without some trouble and cost, in a

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter IV: "Of the Riches, Trade, and Money of the Kingdom of Tunquin."

<sup>2</sup> Aromatic wood. Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 13, says that after silk it is the "chief riches of the country" and devotes a paragraph to it.

<sup>3</sup> Picul, from Malay *pkul*, meaning the weight an average man can lift.

word, the *Tonqueen* trade is at present the most fastidious<sup>4</sup> in all *India*, wherefore I wonder our author should say, it is a great pleasure to deal with them; for if you bargain for any thing, and are likely to lose thereby, you are sure to bear the loss. Nothing almost is sold but upon trust for three or four months time, and yet then you run the hazard to lose what is so sold, or at least to undergo a thousand troubles for the recovery of the debt, and at last are likely to suffer, either in bad coin or unmerchanted goods. This defect and disorder in trade, proceeds more from their indigency and poverty than from any thing else; for there is not a *Tonquese* merchant that has ever had the courage and ability to buy the value of two thousand dollars at once, and to pay it upon the nail. But after all, the *Tonquese* are not altogether so fraudulent, and of that deceitful disposition as the *Chinese*; it may be, by reason they are inferior to them in craft or cunning.<sup>5</sup>

There is this further difference between these two nations; a *Tonquese* will beg incessantly, and torment your purse sufficiently, if you have business with him; whereas a *Chinese* is cruel and bloody, maliciously killing a man, or flinging him into the sea for small matters.

Another occasion of hindrance and stop to trade is, that they permit the greater part of what silver comes into the country (commonly a million dollars *per annum*) to be carried to *Bowes* and *China*, to be exchanged for copper cash, which rises and falls according as the *Choua Ichual* finds it agree with his interest; besides, this cash will be defaced in a few years, and consequently not current, which grand inconvenience causes considerable losses to merchants, and signal prejudice to the publick. Thus goes the silver out of the country, and no provision is made against it, which is very bad policy.

And tho' the *Choua* values foreign trade so little, yet he receives from it, embarrassed as it is, considerable annual incomes into his coffers; as taxes, head-money, impositions, customs, &c. But tho' these amount to vast sums, yet very little remains in the treasury, by reason of the great army he maintains, together with several other unnecessary expenses. In fine, 'tis pity so many conveniences and opportunities to make the kingdom rich, and its trade flourishing, should be neglected; for if we consider how this kingdom borders on two of the richest provinces in *China*, it will appear, that with small difficulty most commodities of that vast empire might be drawn hither, and great store of *Indian* and *European* commodities, especially woollen manufactures, might be vended there; nay, would they permit strangers the freedom of this inland trade, 'twould be vastly advantageous to the kingdom; but the *Choua* (jealous that *Europeans* should discover too much of his frontiers, by which certainly he can receive no injury) has, and will probably in all time to come, impede this important affair.

They have no coin but copper cash, which comes from *China*, as aforesaid. Gold and silver they cash into bars about fourteen dollars weight, and they are current amongst them.

<sup>4</sup> The seventeenth-century sense of the word: irksome and disagreeable.

<sup>5</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 13: "It is so much the more pleasure and profit to trade with the People of Tunquin, by how much the more faithful and frank they are in their dealing than the Chinese, who will deceive you if they can; so that it is a hard thing to be too cunning for them, as I have often found by experience."

## CHAPTER V.

OF THE STRENGTH OF THE KINGDOM  
OF TONQUEEN.<sup>1</sup>

The kingdom of *Tonqueen* might be reckon'd very formidable, were the strength wholly to consist in the number of men, for the standing force cannot be less than one hundred and forty thousand, all well trained up, and fit to handle their arms, after their mode; and they can raise twice that number on occasion. But since courage in the men is to be likewise attended to, we cannot esteem them very formidable, being of dejected spirits and base dispositions, and their leaders being for the most part capadoes [eunuchs], and want their manhood.

The general may muster up about eight or ten thousand horse, and between three and four hundred elephants; his sea force consists in two hundred and twenty galleys, great and small, more fit for the river than the sea, and rather for sport and exercise than war.<sup>2</sup> They have but one gun in the prow, which will carry a four pound shot; they have no masts, and are forc'd to do all by strength of oars; the men that row stand all exposed to great or small shot, and other engines of war. They have about five hundred other boats, called *Twinjies*,<sup>3</sup> which are good and swift to sail, but too weak for war, being only sew'd together with rattans; however, they serve well enough for transportation of provisions and soldiers.

In one of these boats I was forc'd to go to *Siam*, the last year, with three other gentlemen in company with me, we being left by a *Chinese* (in whose junk we had taken passage) on an isle on the westmost part of the bay of *Tonqueen*, where we were forced to this shift; yet, thanks be to God, we got our passage in twenty-three days, to the admiration of all who knew of it.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter V: "Of the Strength of the Kingdom of Tunquin by Sea and Land."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 15, gives a description Tavernier attributes to his brother of the Tonkinese army "... in the year 1649, when the King was preparing to make War against the King of Cochinchina ... " This year 1649 is an error for 1648, for the Tonkinese expedition against Cochinchina occurred in 1648 and Tavernier's brother died in Java in late 1648. The description: "The Army that was then prepared to march upon this Expedition was composed of 8000 Horse, 94 thousand Foot, and 722 Elephants; 130 for the War, and the rest to carry the Tents and Baggage of the King and the Nobility; and 318 Gallies and Barks, very long and narrow, with Oars and Sails; and this was that which my Brother saw."

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this is Baron's transcription of *thuyên giã*, per the suggestion of Baron's French translator (*Revue Indochinoise* XXII.8 [August 1914]: 200), or as seems more plausible and idiomatic to me, *thuyên chài*, "fishing boat"; *thuyên* means "boat" while the modifiers *giã* and *chài* each refer to a fishing net.

They are likewise provided with guns and cannons of all sorts, and also calibres, some of them of their own fabrick, but the greatest part bought of the *Portuguese*, *Dutch*, and *English*, and stored with other ammunition suitable to their occasions.

But to return to the condition of the soldiery of *Tonqueen*: It is a very toilsome and laborious situation, and of little advantage; once a soldier and always a soldier,<sup>4</sup> and hardly one in a thousand riseth to preferment, unless he be very dextrous in handling his weapons, or so fortunate as to obtain the friendship of some great *Mandaren*, to present him to the king: Money may likewise effect somewhat, but to think of advancement by mere valour, is a very fruitless expectation, since they rarely find occasion to meet an enemy in open field, and so have no opportunity to improve themselves, or display their prowess; not but that some few have, from mean beginnings, mounted to high pretermitt and great dignity, by some bold achievement; but this being extraordinary, is not to be generally reckon'd upon.

Their wars consist in much noise and great trains; so they go to *Cochin-china*, look on the walls, rivers, &c. and if any disease or sickness happens amongst their army, so as to carry off some few of their men, and they come within hearing of the shouts of the enemy, they begin to cry out, A cruel and bloody war, and turn head, running, *re infecta*, as fast as they can home. This is the game they have play'd against *Cochin-china* more than three times, and will do so, in all probability, as long as they are commanded by those emasculated captains called *Capons*.

They have had amongst themselves civil wars, wherein they contended for superiority, and he that has been the cunningest has prevailed always against him that has been valiant. But in former days, when they fought against the *Chinese*, they have shew'd themselves bold and courageous, but it was necessity that forced them to it. The general will sometimes take delight in seeing his soldiers exercise, either in his arsenal, or with his gallees on the river, and sometimes when he finds a soldier to exceed his companions, it may be, he gratifies him with the value of a dollar in cash.

The soldiers have very small pay, not above three dollars in a year, besides rice, except those of the life-guard, who have twice as much; they are free of all taxes, and are dispersed among the *Mandarens*, which *Mandarens* have certain *Aldens* assign'd them, which pay an income to them for the maintenance of the soldiers.

Castles, forts, strong-holds, citadels, &c. they have none, nor do they understand the art of fortification, and make but small account of our skill therein; though they have so little reason to depend, like the *Lacedemonians*, on the bravery of their soldiers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 15: "The condition of the soldiery is very toilsome and laborious, and of little advantage in the Kingdom of Tunquin. For they are all their life time so fit'd and engag'd to the service of the wars ..."

<sup>5</sup> The reference here is to the ancient Spartans, famed for their formidable infantry.

## CHAPTER VI.

OF THE MANNERS OF THE PEOPLE OF  
TONQUEEN.<sup>1</sup>

The people of *Tonqueen* are rather of a working and turbulent spirit, (tho' cowards) than naturally mild and peaceable,<sup>2</sup> since quiet and concord can hardly be maintain'd amongst them, without a heavy hand and severity; for they have often conspired and broke out in open rebellion. True it is, that superstition (to which the meaner sort are miserably addicted) did further the evil very much, and drove them headlong into the precipice, no less than ambition; but persons of great note, or *Mandareens* of quality, are very seldom found to be embark'd in those dangerous attempts, and rarely aim to make themselves heads of public factions, which, questionless, proceeds from the little credit they give to those fictions and fopperies of their blind fortunetellers, who delude and mislead the ignorant and superstitious vulgar, and from this their consciousness, that their folly and perditionness will hardly fail to meet with deserved destruction.

They are not given much to cholera, yet are addicted to the far worse passions of envy and malice, even to an extreme degree. In former times they had in great esteem the manufactures of strange countries, but now that passion is almost worn out, and only a few *Japan* gold and silver pieces, and *European* broad cloth remain at present in request with them. They are not curious to visit other countries, believing they can see none so good as their own, and give no credit to those who have been abroad, when they can relate what they have seen.

They are of happy memory and quick apprehension, and might prove of eminent abilities by good and due instructions: Learning they love, not so much for its own sake, but because it conducts them to public employ and dignities. Their tone in reading is much like to singing. Their language is full of monosyllables, and sometimes twelve or thirteen several things are meant by one word, and have no other distinction, but in their tone, either to pronounce it with a full mouth, heavy accent, pressing or retaining voice, &c. and therefore it is difficult for strangers to attain any perfection therein.

I do not find any difference between the court language and the vulgar, except in matter of ceremony and cases of law, where the *China* characters are used as the *Greek* and *Latin* sentences amongst our learned.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter VI: "Of the Manners and Customs of the People of the Kingdom of Tunquin."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16: "The people of Tunquin are naturally mild and peaceful, submitting easily to reason, and condemning the transports of cholera."

Both sexes are well proportioned,<sup>3</sup> rather of small stature and weak constitutions, occasioned, perhaps by their intemperate eating and immoderate sleeping.

They are generally of brown complexion, like the *Chinese* and *Japanese*, but the better sort, and women of quality, are almost as fair as the *Portuguese* and *Spaniards*.

Their noses and faces are not so flat as the *Chinese*, their hair black, and if long, 'tis reckon'd an ornament, both men and women, without distinction, wear it down as long as it will grow,<sup>4</sup> but soldiers, when they are in their exercises, and handicrafts-men about their trades, put it up under their caps, or tie it in a great roll on the top of their heads. Both boys and girls, when they are past sixteen or seventeen years of age, black their teeth as the *Japanese* do, and let their nails grow as the *Chinese*, the longest being accounted the finest, which has place amongst persons of quality and those of wealth only.

Their habit is long robes, very little differing from those of *China*, and not at all resembling the *Japan* garb, or the picture in *Tavernier's* description, where he makes them wear girdles, a mode these people are strangers to.<sup>5</sup>

They are forbidden by an old tradition the wear of hose or shoes, except the literadoes (*Literati*) and those that have taken the degree of *Tuncy* (or *Doctor*); however, at present the custom is not observed so strictly as formerly.

The condition of the vulgar sort is miserable enough, since they are imposed on by heavy taxes, and undergo sore labour; for the males at eighteen, and in some countries and provinces twenty years of age, are liable to pay the value of three, four, five, six, and seven dollars *per annum*, according to the goodness and fertility of the soil of their *Aldea*, or village; and this money is gathered in two several terms, as *April* and *October*, being the harvest of the rice. From this tax are exempted the royal blood, the king's immediate servants, all public ministers and officers of the kingdom, together with the *Literadoes*, or learned men, from a *Singdo*,<sup>7</sup> upwards, (for the latter are obliged to pay half tax), all soldiers and military persons, with a few others that have obtained this freedom, either *gratis*, or bought it for money, which exemption is granted only for life, and is purchas'd of the *Choua*, or General; yet those that desire the continuation of the said privilege, may have their patent renew'd for a moderate sum of money, by the succeeding prince, who seldom denies to grant them their redemption on such an account; but merchants, though they live in the city, are rated in the *Aldeas* or villages of their ancestors and parents, and are liable besides to the *Vicquian*,<sup>8</sup> or lord's service, of the city, at their own expenses, and are obliged to work and drudge themselves, or hire another in their room, to perform what the governor orders, whether it be to mend the broken walls, repair the banks and ways of the city, dragging timber for the king's palaces, and other public buildings, &c.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17: "The Tunquineses, as well as Men as Women, are for the most part well proportion'd. . ."

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: "Their Hair is very black, which they usually wear as long as it will grow, being very careful in combing it."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: "Their Habit is grave and modest, being a long Robe that reaches down to their heels, much like that of the Japonenses, without any distinction of sex."

<sup>6</sup> Vietnamese *tiết sĩ*, the highest academic degree awarded in the examination system.

<sup>7</sup> Vietnamese *sinh đồ*, the lowest-level degree awarded in the examination system.

<sup>8</sup> Vietnamese *việc quan* (corvée).

The handicrafts-men, of what profession soever, are bound to this *Vacquan* six moons in the year, and receive nothing, nor dare they demand any thing for their labour in all that time; it depends on their Masters, the *Mandarens*, direction and bounty, to allow them the charges for their very victuals; the other half year they are allow'd to make use of for themselves and family, and it must be supposed to be hard enough with them, especially if they are burthen'd with many children.

As for the poor *Aldans*, who inhabit barren soils, and therefore are unable to pay their taxes in rice or money, they are employ'd to cut grass for the general's elephants and horses, and though their stations and villages be often very remote from the place where they fetch the grass, they are obliged to bring it by turns the whole year, on their own expenses, to the city.

By what is said, it appears, with what politick maxims this prince keeps his subjects poor and needy; and in truth, it seems to be necessary enough, for if their proud turbulent spirits were not kept in the bounds of their duty and allegiance with a strong rein, they would often forget themselves; however, every one enjoys what he gets by his own industry, and may leave his estate to his heirs and successors; always provided that the rumour of his wealth sounds not so loud as to charm the general's ear.

The eldest son's portion is much larger than the rest of the children of the deceased; the daughters have some small matter allow'd them, yet can claim but little by law, if there be an heir male.

And as the *Tonquenees* are ambitious of many dependents and opulent kindred, so they have a custom among them to adopt one another (both sexes indifferently) to be their children, and of their family; and those so adopted are obliged to the same duty as their own children, *viz.*

At festival times to sombey<sup>9</sup> and present them; to be ready on every occasion in their service; to bring them the first-fruits of the season, and the new rice at harvest; to contribute to the sacrifice made to some of the family, as the mother, brother, wife, &c. or near relations, of the *Patron* [patron], that are dead, or shall die. To these and several other expenses they are obliged, several times in the year, at their own cost: And as this is the obligation of the adopted, so the *Patron* takes care to advance or promote them, according as occasion and their power will permit, defending and protecting them as their own children, and when the *Patron* dies, they have a legacy almost equal to the youngest children; and they mourn for the *Patron* as for their own father and mother, though they both be alive.

The manner of adopting is thus: He that intends to be adopted, sends to acquaint the person of whom he requests that favour, with his intention, who, if content therewith, returns a satisfactory answer, upon which the suppliant comes and presents himself before him, with a hog and two jars of arrack, which the *Patron* receives of the party, who having made four sombeys, and given satisfactory answers to some questions, he is adopted.

Strangers who reside here, or use the trade, have often taken this course, to free themselves from those vexations and extortions, which they usually meet with from some insolent courtiers. I myself was adopted by a prince, who then was presumptive, and now heir apparent to the general,<sup>10</sup> and had his *Chiop*, or *Chop*, which is his seal. I always gave him presents at my arrival from a voyage, which

<sup>9</sup> To bow in greeting.

<sup>10</sup> The "general" is Trinh Can; the "heir apparent" is mentioned again in Chapter XII.

chiefly consisted in foreign curiosities. This prince, tho' he be of a generous, noble mind, and had an extraordinary kindness for me, yet I was not the better for him in my troubles; for on the decease of his grandfather,<sup>11</sup> it pleased God to visit him, in the height of his prosperity with madness, which was the overthrow of my business, by incapacitating him to protect me in my greatest trouble and necessity; but lately I understand he is recover'd again.<sup>12</sup>

The *Aldans* or Villagers, for the most part, are simple people, and subject to be misled by their over-much credulity and superstition. The character that is given of some other nations is applicable enough to them; that is, they are extraordinary good, or extreme bad.

'Tis a great mistake, that the people of *Tonqueen* live out of pleasure, or choice, in their boats upon the rivers,<sup>13</sup> when mere necessity and indigence drives them to that course of life; for to run from port to port, and from one village to another, with wife and children, to look out for a livelihood, in a small boat, cannot be very pleasant, although they do not know here what a crocodile means.

The largest of the *Tonqueen* rivers has, as I said before, its source in *China*, and the great rains there, in the months of *March*, *April*, and *May*, cause the waters to descend here with that incredible rapidity (this country being, without comparison, lower than *China*) as threatens banks and dams with destruction; sometimes the waters will rise so fast, and swell to that degree, as to over-top most barricadoes, all human industry notwithstanding, drowning thereby whole provinces, which causes lamentable disorders and great losses, both of men and beasts.

<sup>11</sup> Trinh Tac died in 1682.

<sup>12</sup> Temporary "insanity" was not an unusual method for Vietnamese princes to employ in order to avoid difficult or unwanted situations.

<sup>13</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 18: "... the Tunquenees take great delight to live upon the Rivers ..."

## CHAPTER VII.

OF THE MARRIAGES OF THE  
TONQUEENESE.<sup>1</sup>

The *Tonqueenese* cannot marry without the consent of their father and mother, or of the nearest kindred.<sup>2</sup> When a young man comes to the age of sixteen, eighteen, or twenty, his father and mother being resolved to get him a wife, make their application to the parents of the party they design for him, carrying with them an hundred dressed beetles,<sup>3</sup> in a decent box, one jar of arrack, or strong liquor, and a live hog; under favour of such a present only, this is to be proposed. The friends of the maid seeing the visitants thus prepar'd, and knowing by the custom of the country whereto it tends, give fitting answers to the question in hand, according to their inclinations; for if they are unwilling it should be a match, they find their subtrefuges and excuses, by pretending their daughter's youth and inability to take upon her the burthen of a household, and that, however, they will consider of the matter further hereafter, and the like compliments, wherewith they and their presents are sent back again.

But in the case they are content to bestow their daughter on the young man, the presents are readily accepted of, with expressions of their approbation of the business; and then immediately, without any other formality, they consult and agree about the most auspicious time (in which they are guided by their blind superstition) for the solemnization of the wedding: In the mean time the parents of the bridegroom send often presents of victuals to the bride, and visit her now and then yet the young people are not permitted so much as to speak to each other.

At the prefix'd time the wedding is kept, with a feast agreeable to the condition and abilities of the parents of the young couple, which doth not last above a day. The ceremony of the marriage is barely this: In the afternoon of the day that precedes the wedding, the bridegroom comes to the bride, and brings with him, according to his quality, either gold, silver, or a quantity of cash (the more the greater honour), and victuals prepared, all which he leaves there, and retires to his own home. The next morning being the wedding day, the bride is dress'd in her finest robes, with bracelets of gold, pendants, &c. her parents, acquaintance, and servants are ready to conduct and wait on her to the bridegroom's, whither she goes about ten o'clock in the forenoon, with all this train attending her, whilst all her moveables, household-

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter VII: "Of the Marriages of the Tunquineses and their severity toward adulteresses."

<sup>2</sup> Compare with *ibid.*, p. 18: "The Tunquineses cannot marry without the consent of the father and mother, or if they be dead, without the allowance of their nearest kindred."

<sup>3</sup> "Dressed beetles" means packets of areca nut and betel leaf smeared with a lime paste, ready to be chewed.

stuff, and whatever else her father and mother gave for her portion, together with what she had of the bridegroom, is carried in great state; and for a more glorious shew, it passes a long field before her and the whole company, all which enter the bridegroom's house, who receives her and them with kindness and courtesy, after their mode, and presents them with victuals prepared for the purpose, whilst musick and other expressions of joy, are not neglected: And this is the whole solemnity of the wedding, without any further formality of either magistrate or priest, as our author talks.<sup>4</sup>

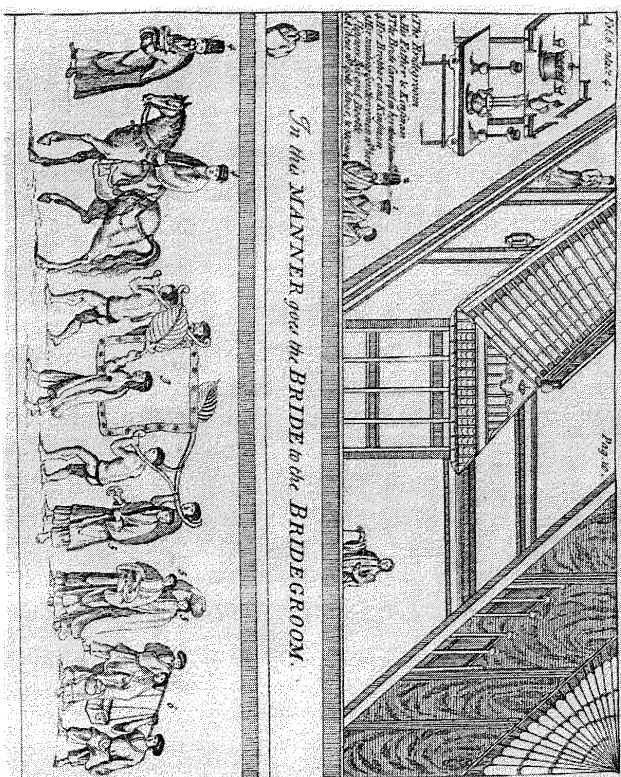


Plate 4: "In this Manner goes the Bride to the Bridegroom." 1. The Bridegroom. 2. His Father and Kinsman. 3. The Bride Carried in her Hammock. 4. Her Brother and Kinsman.

5. Her Waiting Gentewomen with her Slippers Box and Beele.

6. A Chest with Gold, Silver, and Money.

Polygamy is here tolerated; however, that woman whose parents are of the greatest quality, is chief amongst them, and has the title of wife.

Rapes, and the like, are not known, much less practiced in this country. The law of the land permits the man to divorce his wife, but the woman has not the same privilege, and can hardly obtain a separation, against the good-liking of the husband,

<sup>4</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 18: "They must also have the permission of the Judge or Governour of the place where the Marriage is to be made ..."



## CHAPTER VIII.

unless she be of a family that is able to compel him to it, by mere authority. When the husband designs to repudiate his wife, he gives her a note, declaring under his hand and seal, that he has no more pretensions to her person, and that she is free to dispose of herself, as she finds occasion, which liberty capacitates her to marry another; neither would any person dare to pretend to her, without being certain of the said note, for fear of the former husband, who in that case can claim her again, and thereby embroil such a one in the labyrinths of the law, and recover a good sum of money from him.

The woman so repudiated, when she departs from her husband, may take along with her the same quantity of gold, silver, cash, &c. as he brought to her house, at the time of his espousing her. The children born during the time of their mutual cohabitation, the husband keeps; but their *Mandarens* seldom, and only on urgent occasions, or for capital offences, will deal thus severely with their wives; yet their concubines are thus served, on every light occasion, when the humour takes them to make an exchange, or that they are satiated with their persons. Among the meaner sort, when a man and his wife disagree, and mutually desire a separation, they are divorced in the presence of some small judge and public officers, by mutual discharges in writing; but the village husband, that cannot read nor write, breaks a copper cash, his country money, or a stick in the presence of his wife, as a testimony of his resolution to dismiss her; the one half he keeps himself, and the other he gives to her, which she carries to the heads and elders of the *Alden*, or village, requesting them to bear witness, her husband hath discharged her of her duty, to be any longer his wife, and that he has nothing more to pretend to her, for ever; so she may either keep or throw away the piece of cash, or stick, and marry again as soon as she pleases.

As for adultery, if a man of quality surprises his wife in the fact, he may freely, if he pleases, kill her and her paramour, with his own hands; otherwise the woman is sent to be trampled to death by an elephant; the adulterer is delivered to the justice, who proceeds with him to execution without any further delay. But with the meaner sort of people it is not so; they must go to law, where the offenders will have severe punishment inflicted on them, if they are proved guilty of the crime.

The story that Monsieur *Tavernier* relates to have happened whilst his brother was in *Tonqueen* is not at all agreeable to the customs of this people, or congruous with their dispositions; wherefore, in all probability, 'tis only a fiction.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 19-21. *Tavernier* attributes a story to his brother about the case of a "prince" consorting with a "princess" who was a woman of a deceased "king"; this prince was reportedly punished with several years of imprisonment and then banishment to the frontiers as a common soldier, while the "princess" was executed by starvation and exposure to the sun.

## OF THE VISITS AND PASTIMES OF THE TONQUENESE.<sup>1</sup>

Their visits are generally made in the afternoon.<sup>2</sup> It is uncivil to come to any great man's house before dinner, unless necessitated by urgent business, or expressly invited, because they then have the least time to spare; for in the morning very early they go to court, to attend the general; which attendance takes them up 'till eight o'clock: when they come home, they employ themselves a while in ordering their domestic concerns, among their servants (if more important state-affairs will permit it); the little space that remains between that and dinner is reserved for their retirement and repose.

The princes, or great *Mandarens*, ride either on elephants, or carried in *hangmuck* [hammock], and followed by most of their servants, soldiers, dependants, &c. that are not otherwise occupied in such a season, which is more or less numerous, according to the degree of the person's dignity; those of lesser rank ride on horseback, and are followed by as many as they are able to maintain, without limitation, which usually is not above ten persons, but to be sure all that can, must go, for they are very ambitious of many attendants.

If he that gives the visit is of greater quality than the person visited, he<sup>3</sup> dares not to offer him anything of meat or drink, no, not so much as a beetle, unless he calls for it: Their water and beetle is always carried with them by their servants.

In discoursing with them, especially if the person be of authority, care must be had not to move any mournful subject, either directly or indirectly; but things that are pleasant, in commendation of them, are best approved. But that which is most intolerable in those lords is, that they permit the men of their train (a rude brutish gang) to enter with them into the most private apartments of other people's houses, especially when they come to visit *Europæans*, where they behave themselves very apishly, and commit many absurdities and impertinencies in their talk and jestings; and moreover, often steal whatever they can lay hold on: In all which their stupid masters rather take delight, than check them for their sauciness and misdemeanours. But if they are invited by their inferiors or equals, then they entertain them as they find occasion, either with tea or meat, &c. not omitting beetle, which is always the first and last part of the regale. The boxes wherein the beetle is presented, are generally plain lacquered, either black, red, or some grave colour; yet the gentry, and the princes and princesses of the royal blood, have them of massy gold, silver,

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste *Tavernier*, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter VIII: "Of the Visits, Feasts, and Pastimes of the Tunquineses."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 21: "Generally they make their visits about noon."

<sup>3</sup> The person visited.

tortoiseshell, or inlaid with mother of pearl, the painted and gaudy ones are only used at their sacrifices in their *Pagodas*. But such rich boxes as M. Tavernier avers to have seen, to the value of four or five hundred thousand livres,<sup>4</sup> at the *Great Mogul's* court, were certainly no *Tonqueen* ones; for diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other jewels do not grow in this country, neither are they in request among the natives, nor could they have been brought there by any *Tonqueen* ambassador, since the king sends none thither, nor is there the least commerce between the two nations.<sup>5</sup>

They seldom visit sick persons, and they hardly care to admit any but their kindred and relations to put them in mind of death, how desperate soever their state may be, and the least admonition to settle their affairs and concerns, would be a heinous crime and unpardonable offence; so that those that die make no will, which defect often creates vexatious law-suits among the kindred, if the deceased leaves no children behind him, even to the ruin of their own estates, and the loss of what they contend for.

In the halls of great men's houses are several alcoves, where they sit cross-legg'd upon mats, according to their degree, the higher the more honorable; and these seats are all cover'd with mats, answerable in fineness to their stations; except in time of mourning, when they are oblig'd to use coarse ones. As for carpets, they have none, neither can they afford them; wherefore I wonder at our author's saying, that the mats are as dear as fine carpet, which at the cheapest, costs from thirty to fifty rupees, and upwards, in *Persia* and *Surat*; whereas the best and finest mat may be bought here for the value of three or four shillings at the most; neither do I believe that any *European*, besides himself, has ever seen a *Tonqueen* mat nine ells<sup>6</sup> square, and as soft as velvet. However, this is like the rest of his fables.<sup>7</sup> As for cushions, these people use none, either to sit or lie on; but they have a kind of bolster made of reeds or mats, to sleep or lean on.

As for their victuals they are curious enough therein,<sup>8</sup> though their diet doth not generally please strangers. The common sort must then be content with green trade,<sup>9</sup> rice, and salt fish, or the like; the great lords may, if they please, feed themselves with the best in the land.

I can make no comparison for neatness, between the *Europeans* and them, in their houses, wherein they have but little or no furniture more than usual in the meanest cottages, sometimes tables and benches, seldom chairs. They use neither table-cloths nor napkins, nor do they want them, since they do not touch their meat with their

<sup>4</sup> An old French unit of value.

<sup>5</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," pp. 21-22, about betel boxes, writes: "... I have seen some at the Apartments of some of the Princes that came to the Court of the Great Mogul, which were worth above 4 or 500000 Livres: One shall be cover'd with Diamonds, another with Rubies and Pearls, another with Enrinals and Pearls, or else with other jewels."

<sup>6</sup> An ell is an old English unit of length equal to 45 inches.

<sup>7</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 22: "Being at Bantam I bought one of these mats of a Tunquinese, which was admired for its fineness. It was nine ells square, and as even and as soft as velvet. With these mats they cover the beds or couches, upon which the Mandarins, or Princes, and the Nobility which accompany them, seat themselves around the chamber, every one having one cushion under him, and another at his back."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: "As for their diet the Tunquineses are not very curious."

<sup>9</sup> Green herbs and vegetables.

fingers, but use two sticks, as the *Chinese* and *Japanese* do. All their victuals is served in little plates and dishes, not made of wood, and then varnish'd or lacquer'd over, as Mr. Tavernier affirms,<sup>10</sup> but of *China* and *Japan* wares, which are in esteem here. Persons of quality or condition use a kind of formality and decency at their feasts; but as for the rest, as soon as they are at the *bandes*,<sup>11</sup> which are small laquer'd tables, they do not so much as mind any discourses; and this not out of good manners or reverence to the aged and grave persons,<sup>12</sup> but a greedy desire to fill their guts, they being generally great eaters and true epicures; also they may be afraid to lose their share by prating, whilst others make all the silent haste they can, to empty the platters and dishes. I have often seen the followers and attendants of the *Mandarins* at the like sport, and used to admire their eating both for quantity and greediness, in which I believe no nation under the cope of heaven can match them.

As for drinking, though the clowns and meaner sort seldom fall under the excess and debauchery of strong drink, yet amongst the courtiers and soldiers drunkenness is no vice. A fellow that can drink smartly, is a brave blade. It is no custom of theirs to wash their hands when they go to table, only they rinse their mouths, because of the beetle; yet after meals, they often wash both; and having cleaned their teeth with a piece of bamboo, prepared for the purpose, they eat beetle. At a friend's house the entertained may freely, if he please, call for more boiled rice, or anything else, if he is not satisfied, which the host takes very kindly. They do not ask one another, how they do, but compliment them with a *Where have you been thus long?* and, *What have you done all this while?* And if they know or perceive by their countenance, that they have been sick or indisposed, then they ask, *How many cups of rice they eat at a meal?* (for they make three in a day, besides a collation in the afternoon, amongst the rich and wealthy) and, *Whether he eats with appetite or no?*

Of all the pastimes of the *Tonqueneese*, they affect most their balls, ballads, and singing, which are, for the most part, acted in the night, and last 'till morning, and are what Monsieur Tavernier calls comedies: A very improper name,<sup>13</sup> and resembling them in no respect, much less are they set out with beautiful decorations and machines, as he says, very pleasing to behold; and they are skillful to represent sea and river water, and marine combats thereon,<sup>14</sup> as they are able to describe the fight in 1588, between the *English* and the *Spaniards*,<sup>15</sup> neither have they in the city

<sup>10</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 22: "Whatever is set before them to eat, is served in little plates, not so big as our trenchers, being made of wood lackered with all sorts of flowers."

<sup>11</sup> Vietnamese *bin* means "table"; it is unclear what term is being transcribed by *bandes*.

<sup>12</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 23: "When there are several sitting at the table, either at their ordinary meals, or upon some festival, they account it a great piece of manners to be silent; or if they have a desire to discourse, they always allow the eldest the honour of beginning, bearing a great respect to them that are aged."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.: "Among all the Pastimes of the Tunquineses there are none wherein they take so much delight as in Comedies. ..."

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.: "... they are set out with beautiful decorations and machines, very pleasing to behold. They are excellently well skilled in representing the Sea and Rivers, and a shew of seafights, and combats between galleys and barks. ..."

<sup>15</sup> Barton is ridiculing Tavernier's description of theatrical sea battles by saying it is as plausible to imagine as it would be to expect that Vietnamese would be able to reenact the famous battle of the English with the Spanish Armada in the English Channel which took place a century before.



any theatres to act upon, but every *Mandreen's* hall, and the yards of other houses must serve turn: Yet in their *Aldes* they have singing houses, erected at the expense of three, four or more *Aldes* or villages, and in this they celebrate their festival times, singing and banqueting, after their mode. The actors of one house are sometimes three, four, or five persons; their fees are no more than a thousand cash, to the value of a dollar for a whole night's labour: But the liberal spectators give them presents, as often as they perform any thing dextrously. They are usually habited in country taffeties [taffeta], palongs,<sup>16</sup> satins, and the like. They have but few songs, and not above five different tunes, and those composed most in praise of their kings and generals, interspers'd with amorous interjections and poetical elegance. The women only dance, and she that dances must sing too, and will be, between whiles, interrupted by a man that plays the part of a jester, who is generally the wittiest mimic they can find, and such a one as is able to make the company laugh at his inventions and postures. Their musical instruments are drums, copper basons,<sup>17</sup> hauboy's lobbies, guitars, with two or three sorts of violins &c. Besides this, they have another kind of dancing, with a bason filled or piled up with small lamps lighted, which a woman sets on her head, and then dances, turning, winding, and bowing her body in several shapes and figures, with great celerity, without spilling a drop of oil in the lamps, to the admiration of the spectators; this act will last about half an hour.

Dancing on ropes their women are also expert at, and some will perform it very gracefully.

Cock-fighting is a mighty game amongst them, so that it is become a princely sport, and much in fashion with courtiers. They lose much that lay<sup>18</sup> against the general, for right or wrong he must and will win, whereby he impoverishes his grantees, so they will not be able to undertake any thing.

They delight much in fishing, and have the convenience of many rivers, and infinite ponds.

As for hunting, there is scarce a wood or forest proper for this exercise, in all the country, neither are they expert in that sport.

But their grand pastime is their new year's feast, which commonly happens about the 25th of *January*, and is kept by some thirty days; for then, besides dancing and the recreations aforesaid, all their other sorts of games, as playing at football, swinging on an engine erected of bamboos at most corners of the streets, tricks of bodily activity, and a kind of hocus-pocus, are brought on the stage, to increase merriment; neither are they behind-hand to prepare their feasts and banquets plentiful and large, striving to outdo each other therein, for the space of three or four days, according to their ability; and as this is indeed the time to gormandize and debauch to excess, so he is accounted the most miserable wretch that doth not provide to welcome his friends and acquaintance, tho' by so doing he is certain to beg the rest of that year for his livelihood.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps pallion, meaning embroidered with decorative designs.

<sup>17</sup> Cymbals; bason is an old English variant of "basin."

<sup>18</sup> i.e., to lay bets.

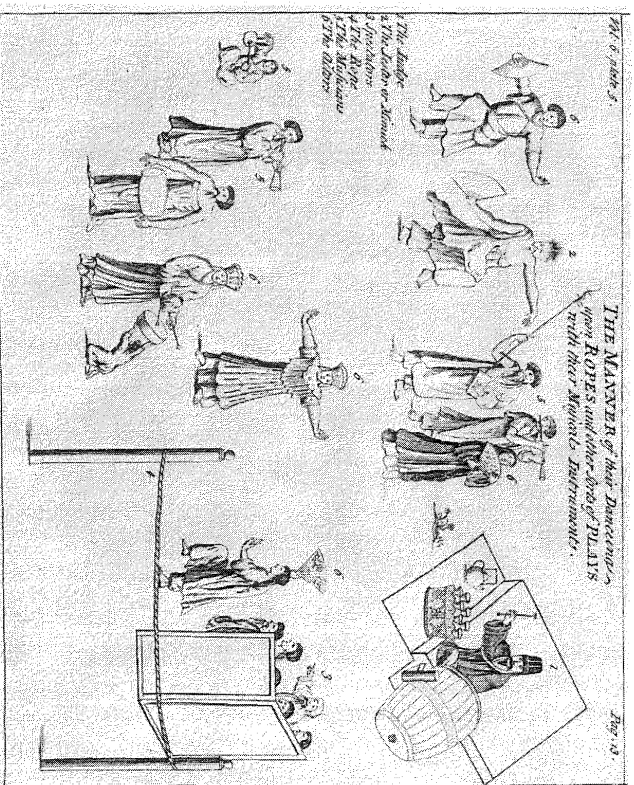


Plate 5: "The Manner of their Dancing on Ropes and other sorts of Plays with their Musical Instruments." 1. The Judge. 2. The Jester or Mimick. 3. Spectators. 4. The Rope. 5. The Musicians. 6. The Actors.

The first day of the year the ordinary sort do not stir abroad (unless they are dependants of some lords) but keep themselves close shut up in their houses, admitting none but their nearest relations and domesticks; to others they would deny, on that day, a draught of water, or a coal for fire, and be very angry too at any one's making such a request, superstitiously believing its consequence would be to subject them to infallible malediction, and that if they should give you any thing that day, it would be their bad destiny to give continually, and beggar themselves thereby at last. Their reason for not stirring abroad proceeds from the same cause, which is fear to encounter with some ominous thing or other, that might presage evil to them, that day, which would make them unfortunate all the year: for they observe superstitiously many frivolous niceties as good and bad luck. But the second day of the new year, they go to visit each other, and acquit themselves of their duty and obligations to their superiors, to sombay them; as likewise do their soldiers and servants to them. But the *Mandarens* go the first day to the king and general, of which they are as careful observers as the others are sharp and precise exactors of this attendance.

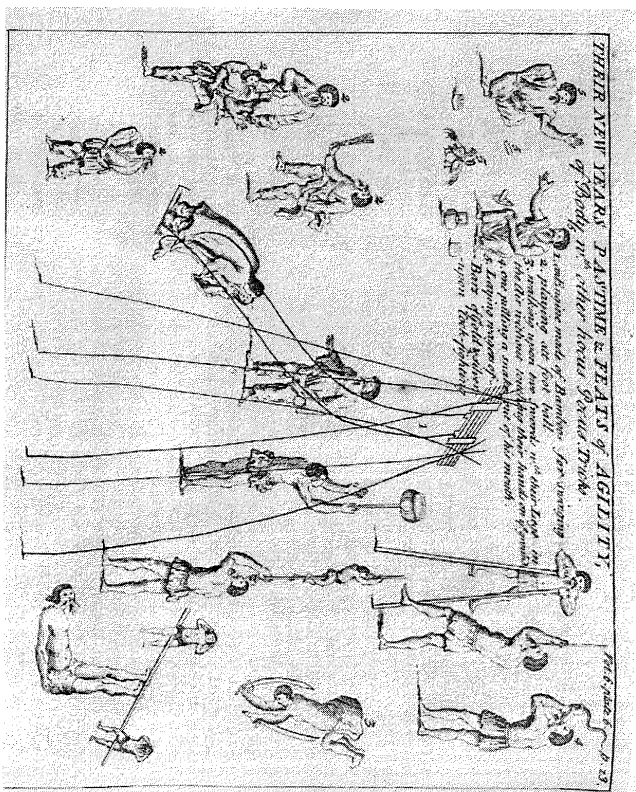


Plate 6: "Their New Years Pastime and Feats of Agility of Body with other Hocus Pocus Tricks." 1. An Engine made of Bamboos for Swinging. 2. Playing at Foot Ball. 3. Walking upon Two Swords with their Legs in the Air without Touching their Hands on the Ground. 4. One Pulling a Snake out of his Mouth. 5. Laying Wagers of Bars of Gold and Silver upon Cock-fighting.

Some reckon their new year from the 25th of their last moon, but very improperly; their ground for it is, because the *Sup Uun*,<sup>19</sup> implying as much as *the great seal reversed*, is then put into a box, with the face downward, for a whole month's time, and in that interval, the law is, as it were, laid asleep, and no acts whatsoever pass under the said seal; all courts of judicature are shut up; debtors cannot be seized on; small crimes, as petty larceny, fighting, beating one another, &c. escape with impunity; only treason and murder the governors of the city and province take account of, and keep the malefactors prisoners 'till the grand seal comes to be active again, to bring them to their trial, &c. But their new year more properly begins at the first of their new moon, which falls out usually about our 25th of *January* as aforesaid, and lasts, according to the *China* custom, one whole month.

By what is related it appears how excessively our author has hyperboliz'd on these passages, especially where he commends the *Tonqueense* for laborious and

<sup>19</sup> Vietnamese *sup ún*, "to tumble the seal."

industrious people, prudently employing their time to the most advantage,<sup>20</sup> which in some degree may be granted in the women, but the men are so lazy and idle generally, that were they not by mere necessity compell'd to work, I verily believe they would be glad to spend their time only in eating and sleeping, for many will surfeit themselves by over-gorging their stomachs, feeding as if they were born only to eat, and not to eat for the support of life chiefly.

It is also a mistake to say, the *Tonqueenese* deem it a disgrace to have their heads uncover'd;<sup>21</sup> for when an inferior comes to a *Mandareen*, either upon business or some errand from a *Mandareen*, he has always his black gown and cap on, and the *Mandareen* receives him bare; but if the messenger comes with an order from the king, either verbal or in writing, then they dare not hear the message, or peruse the note, without putting on their gown and cap. Of this more will be said when I come to speak of the court of *Tonqueen*.

As to criminals, they are shaved as soon as they are commended to die, because they may be known and apprehended if they should chance to out-run their keepers, which is a different thing from being uncover'd, which M. *Taverniere* talks of. So likewise to nail malefactors on crosses,<sup>22</sup> or to dismember them, by four small gallees that row several ways,<sup>23</sup> are torments unheard-of in this country.

<sup>20</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 24: "... being better husbands of their time than we, not sparing any part of it from business."

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22: "The Tunquineses take it for a great dishonour to have their Heads bare, which is only for Criminals ..."

<sup>22</sup> As described in *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> As described in *ibid.*, p. 21.

# OF THE LEARNED MEN OF TONQUEEN.<sup>1</sup>

The *Tonquense* have a great inclination for learning, because it is the only step to acquire dignity and preferments, which encourageth them to a studious and diligent application to learning; which is often attended with good or ill success, as in other countries, according to their several talents, and as they are indued with vivacity, spirit, and more-especially as they are furnish'd with a good or bad memory; which is the chief requisite for mastering that sort of learning, which is in repute in this country, which consists mostly of hieroglyphick characters, whereof they have as many as words or things, requires a very retentive memory. Hence it is, that some scholars are fit to take degrees upon them after twelve or fifteen years study, others in twenty-five or thirty, many not in their life-time.

They may, as soon as they think themselves able or capable, adventure their trial, without either obligation to continue longer a scholar, or limitation of years. Nor have they any publick schools, but every one chuses such a preceptor for his children as he fancies, at his own cost.

Their learning consists not in the knowledge of languages, as among us in *Europe*, much less are they acquainted with our philosophy: but they have one *Confucius*, a *Chinese*, (or, as the people call him, *Congtu*?) the founder of their arts and sciences, which are the same with those of the *Chinese*. This man composed but one book,<sup>3</sup> but he compiled four others<sup>4</sup> from the works of the ancient *Chinese* philosophers, containing morals and political precepts, with their rites and sacrifices, &c. Moreover, his disciples have out of his works extracted diverse rules, sentences, and similes, fit for the state in general, and every person in particular; all which is collected into one tome, divided into four parts, and entitled *The four Books*,<sup>5</sup> which, with the five before-mention'd make nine books, and are the ancientest they have, and of that reputation, that they will admit no contradiction whatsoever against them; and these are the sole foundation of the learning, not only of the *Chinese* and this nation, but also of the *Japanese*, some small differences excepted.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter IX: "Of the learned men in the Kingdom of Tunquin."

<sup>2</sup> Vietnamese *Khổng Tử*.

<sup>3</sup> A reference to the *Lun Yu* (Analects).

<sup>4</sup> Baron apparently counts the *Lun Yu* as one of the "Five Classics," supposedly compiled by Confucius, which in fact do not include the *Lun Yu*.

<sup>5</sup> The "Four Books" traditionally include *Lun Yu*, *Mengzi* (Mencius), and two excerpts from *Liji* (Record of rituals) which is one of the "Five Books."

The said books comprehend likewise the greatest part of their hieroglyphical characters, the multitude of which none can easily affirm, yet they commonly reckon ninety or an hundred thousand; because their learned have a way of compounding and connecting them, to shrink that number; and as it is not necessary for the vulgar sort to know many, so very few do, and twelve or fourteen thousand is sufficient for usual writing.

They are wholly ignorant of natural philosophy, and not more skill'd in mathematics and astronomy; their poesy I do not understand, and their musick I do not find delightful or harmonious; and I cannot but wonder by what faculty Monsieur *Taverniere* has discover'd them to be the most excellent of all the oriental people in that art.<sup>6</sup>

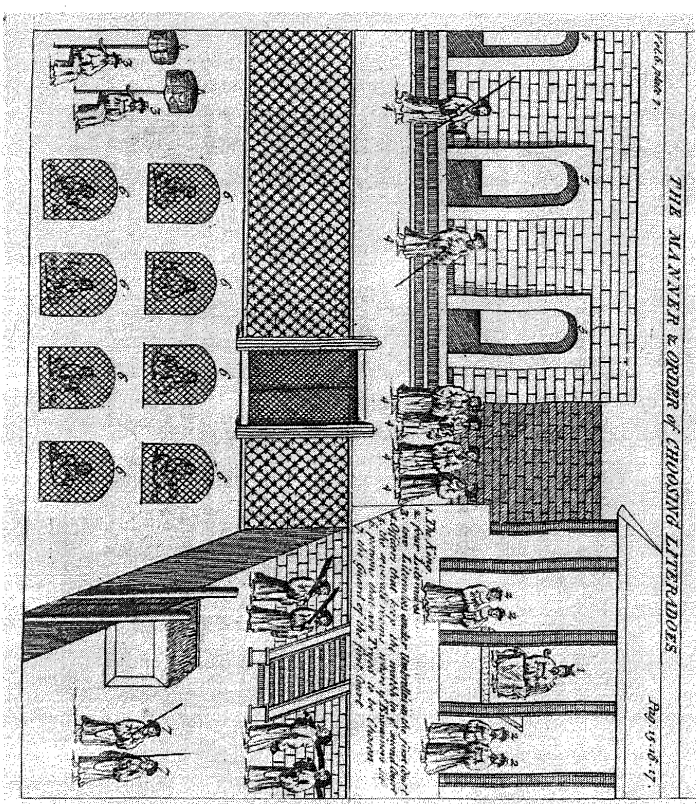


Plate 7: "The Manner and Order of Choosing Literadoes." 1. The King, 2. Four Literadoes. 3. Two Literadoes under Umbrellas in the First Court 4. Officers that Keep the Watch in the Second Court. 5. The Several Rooms where the Examiners Sit. 6. Persons that are Tried to be Chosen. 7. The Guard of the First Court.

<sup>6</sup> Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," p. 25: "... the musicians and actors of Tunquin are accounted the best in the whole Eastern part of the World."

Having thus confusedly mention'd a word or two, in general, of their learning, I return to the scholars. They must, in the acquisition of employ and dignity, (I do not say nobility for the custom is here, that all the honours die with the person, and descend not to his posterity) pass through three degrees; the first of a *Singdo* [*Sinh dō*], something like the *Batchelors* in *Europe*; the second a *Hung-cong* [*Hông công*], resembling our *Licentiates*; the third degree is a *Tuncy* [*Tiến sĩ*], equal to the degree of Doctor with us.

Out of these doctors they choose the ablest, and elect him *Trangvien* [*Trang viên*], which is as much as to say, a president, or professor of learning.

And indeed, the election of these literados is manag'd with the most commendable policy and justice, that I know of, among them; for whereas in all other things they are sway'd by corruption, partiality, or private passions; in the distribution of these degrees they respect singularly the deserts of persons, since no man can obtain any of them, unless he is found worthy thereof, by a strict and most exact examination.

The order and method observed in the promotion of *Singdos*, or batchelors, is thus: Once in three years it is customary for the king and general to nominate two or three *Tuncies*, with some *Wene Quan* [*Văn quan*], or justice of the peace, who has the degree of *Hung-cong*, to be examiners of the design'd academy in that province where the election is to be made (for in this they proceed from one province to another, by turns) whither they repair immediately on receiving their commission. Great care is taken, that none speak with those to be examined on the way, or receive any bribes of them. Being arrived, they take up their lodgings in houses built of bamboos and straw; encompassed with a wall of the same materials, leaving a spacious empty place in the midst thereof for a theatre. The *Tuncies* are presently separated from the *Wene Quan* and the rest in distinct apartments, and are not to speak one with the other, during their function, strict guards being kept at the several doors, and all comers in or out are searched for papers, writings, &c. If any is found to have transgressed herein, he is rigorously punished, and loses his dignity.

In the morning of the day prescrib'd, for the commencing of the said examination, all the students resort to this place, where they find an officer, who exhibits to them five short sentences, written in capital letters, whereof every one, as many as there are, may take copies; which being done, they are all searched for papers or other writings, and then plac'd on the bare ground of the yard aforementioned, at good and equal distance, and many watches are set, that none comes to speak with them.

Thus they sit to write their themes, which they must finish before evening, neither must the said answer contain more than twenty-four sides of paper. And as every one brings in his, he fastens to it, on a particular sheet, his name, the names of his parents and village, which the *Tuncies* tear off, and mark the answer and paper of names with the same number, which are put up severally, according to their province and aldeas.

All the papers being thus served, the *Tuncies* send them to the *Wene Quan*, (the names of their authors being kept in the custody of another officer) to be examined, who throws out all the bad, and sends the good ones to the *Tuncies* again. They, upon a strict review, put out a great many more, so that sometimes of four or five thousand pretenders, only one thousand are approved the first time; the second,

perhaps no more than five hundred; and on the last proof only three hundred are to be graduated batchelors. Such as have behaved themselves well in the first trial, their names come out in publick within eight or ten days after, to be prepared for the second examination; and those whose names are thus thrown out, need not stay, for they cannot be admitted that sessions any more. In the same manner they continue in the second and third trial, only their task at the second trial is but of three sentences, and the answer twelve sides; the last of two sentences, and its reply eight sides, but more difficult than the former. Whosoever passes these trials is declared batchelor, and has his name register'd among those of the same rank, in the book of state, and from that time they pay but half the taxes which they were rated at before, and likewise enjoy some other petty immunities.

Now follows their manner of electing the *Hung-congs*, or *Licentiates*. These are selected out of the batchelors, more or less, as the king pleases to order; they are examin'd by the same officers, and created alternately in the place aforesaid, where the batchelors were. If they can overcome but one proof more, which is the fourth, including the three preceding of the *Singdos*, or batchelors, they become *licentiates*. The formality used in this proceeding is in a manner the same with the former, only they and their examiners are still more severely watched, and they are not permitted to see or speak with any of the competitors; they are separated, and distant enough from each other, when they write their meditations, &c. And all those *Hung-congs* of former creation, must leave, at that time, the province where the school is held, by repairing to the capital city, and abide there 'till the end of the act; many spies are set over them, and they are numbered every day. The like care is recommended to the governors of the other provinces about the said *Hung-congs*, during the solemnity, to prevent frauds and deceits in that behalf.

The examiners propound three sentences out of the book of their prince of philosophers, *Confucius*, and four more out of the volume of his disciples; the arguments of so many orations, which the candidate is to answer with so many themes in writing, which is to be in an elegant and sententious style, and adorned with the best of their rhetoric; the more concise the better.

The examiners then reject the worst, and present the best, who are to proceed to the *Tuncies*, or chief-examiners, and they chuse those that are to be admitted graduates, and expose their names with much ceremony. The privileges and immunities of the *licentiates* are far greater than the batchelors; besides, they have the honour to be presented to the king, who gives to each of them a thousand small pieces of coin, about the value of a dollar in money, and a piece of black callicoe for a gown, worth about three dollars more.

The last or third degree, called *Tuncy*, answerable to our doctors, is conferred every fourth year, at the capital city or court of the kingdom, in a particular palace with marble gates, formerly the best in the country, but now, through age, much decay'd. The choicest and learnedst of the *Hung-congs*, or *licentiates*, are only admitted to this trial; of many competitors few are successful. Their examiners are the king himself, the princes, and most eminent doctors of the realm, with other principal magistrates. This trial is in most circumstances like the two former, except in the questions propounded, which are both of greater number, and more intricate, grave, and specious, being commonly the most difficult part of their ethics, politics, and civil law, and something of poesy and rhetoric, all which they are to expound and resolve in writing, at four several times, in the space of twenty days, and he that doth it, is admitted doctor. This is no easy task, considering what a



burthen it is to the memory, to retain all the characters of the four last of the nine books of *Confucius*, which necessarily they must have, word for word, by heart, to acquit themselves well therein.

They write their themes and meditations on the exhibited sentences, in a close cage made of bamboos for that purpose, and covered with callicoe, wherein they sit from the morning to night, being search'd, that they have nothing about them, but pen, ink, and clean paper, and to watch them the narrower, two doctors, or *Tuncies*, sit at a good distance from them, under umbrellas. Thus they are served at four different times, before they are made *Tuncies* or doctors. The king and general honour this solemnity with their presence the two first days, as the most important, and leave the completing thereof to the ministers. Those thus graduated are congratulated by their friends, applauded by the spectators, and honour'd by their brother doctors, with many complimentary expressions; the king presents each of them with a bar of silver, of the value of fourteen dollars, and a piece of silk, besides the revenue of some aldeas or villages for their maintenance, which is more or less, according to favour or desert, and they are feasted at the publick expense of their aldeas for some time. Out of these the principal magistrates of the kingdom are chosen, and they are sent Embassadors to *China*, and are permitted to wear *Chinese* boots and caps, with their proper vest.

The rejected licentiates may, if they please, continue their study, and try fortune again; if not, they are capable of some magistracy in the country, as justice of peace, head of an aldea, &c.

The batchelors have the same privilege; and those that are unwilling to make any further progress in learning, may find likewise employment, if they have money, among the governors of provinces, in the courts of justice, or as clerks, stewards, secretaries, or solicitors to the *Mandarens*; and in all this an eloquent tongue is not so requisite as a good pen.

Such fire-works as Monsieur *Taverniere* mentions these people to be exquisite in the making of, I have met none all the time I frequented this country, nor any other sorts, unless it be squibs, or the like. And as for those machines, or change of scenes in every act of their comedy, they may be long enough sought after, but will never be found here, where-ever he saw them.<sup>7</sup>

In astrology, geometry, and other mathematical sciences, they are but little skilled,<sup>8</sup> but they understand arithmetic reasonably well, their ethnicks are confusedly deliver'd, not digested into formal method, as is their logic.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-26: "Nor indeed is there any pastime more frequent than that of the theatre in this country; for there is never any solemn festival among them, which is not accompanied and set forth with artificial fireworks, in making whereof these people are exquisite; after which they have their comedies, with machines, and change of scenes in every act."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 25: "... the Mathematicks, and particularly Astronomy, to which all the Orientals have a great inclination, as being great observers of the stars ..."; and p. 26: "They that will learn the Mathematicks, must make their own Instruments themselves, and spend five years in this study."

## CHAPTER X.

# OF THE PHYSICIANS AND DISEASES OF THE TONQUENESE.<sup>1</sup>

Every one that pleases may be a physician in *Tonqueen*, and indeed every one almost is his own doctor, whereby this noble science is become the publick practice of the very dregs of the nation, to the disgrace of the publick in tolerating it.

Their principal study in this science consists only of an examination of some *Chinese* books, that direct them how to boil and compound their roots, herbs, and simples, with some obscure notions of their several qualities, nature, and virtue, but generally so confused, that they know little or nothing, until they add thereto their own experience. They understand hardly any thing of anatomy, or the nature of composition of mens bodies, with the divisions of the several parts thereof, which might lead them to form a judgment of the diseases incident to the human system; but attribute all to the blood, as the principal cause of all the disorders that befall the body, and therefore consider no further the constitution or temper in the application of their remedies; and with them it is enough to succeed well in three or four cures, though by mere chance (for they are hardly ever able to give a reason for what they do) to get the reputation of an excellent *Médecin*, which oftentimes, as it increases their practice, so gives them a greater power to kill their fellow-creatures. Their patients are generally very impatient under the hands of their doctors, who if he doth not afford them present ease and speedy cure, they send for other help, and so often go from bad to worse, 'till they are either well or kill'd, for want of patience on one side, and judgment on the other.

These people generally on visiting a patient, feel the pulse in two places, and that upon the wrist, as the *Europeans*; but they must be the *Chinese* physicians, whom Monsieur *Taverniere* extolls for their skill in the pulse;<sup>2</sup> and I own that some of that nation excell in it, but the far greater number are mere pretenders to this art, and affect to amuse the patient by ostentatious conjectures, and conceited and confused notions, to inspire a belief of their skill, in discovering thereby the cause of diseases, and so gull the credulous patients of their money, and oftentimes their health to boot.

These people have no apothecary among them, every one that professeth the art of the physick prepares the dose himself, which consists, as I mention'd, in the composition of herbs and roots, boiled in water.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, "A New and Singular Relation of the Kingdom of Tunquin," Chapter X: "Of their Physicians, and the Diseases of the Tunquineses."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-29, describes at length methods of feeling the pulse in different parts of the body.

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